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The story of Joseph

THE STORY OF JOSEPH

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The Story of Joseph

Read for its Practical Lessons

By
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"Making the Most of Life," etc.

He holds the key of all unknown
And I am glad;
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if he trusted it to me,
I might be sad.
—*Maltbie D. Babcock.*

PHILADELPHIA
The Westminster Press
1901

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There are many ways of reading the Bible. One of the most helpful is to read it to learn from it how to live so as to please God, attain the highest beauty of character and leave the largest blessing in the world.

There have been many lives of Joseph written. Some of these are very valuable because of the knowledge of ancient Egypt and the Egyptians which they impart in the telling of the story. Nothing of this is attempted in the present chapters, the author's desire being only to find and interpret some of the lessons in life which the narrative has for its earnest readers.

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JOSEPH AND HIS DREAMS

They said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.—*Genesis 37 : 19.*

The balances of man are all untrue;
His weight and eyes deceitful; he may write
The story of a pebble or a rock,
The annals of a beetle or a worm;
But the great story of his own vast being,
The hills and valleys of his life, he cannot:
A life made up of but a few short years,
And yet containing in its troubled round
Tempests, and tides, and changes, failures, conquests,
In daily flux and reflux without end.

—*Horatius Bonar.*

I

JOSEPH AND HIS DREAMS

When a story of providence begins, we never know what the end will be. In seven chapters will be retold the story whose beginning we have here — a boy coming across the fields carrying a basket. God wanted the family of Israel down in Egypt for a few hundred years. Why? Was not Canaan promised to them as their own land? Why not keep them there? Several reasons may be given.

Canaan was filled with warlike tribes. While there was only a handful of the Israelites, these tribes let them alone. But they were now to grow rapidly, and as soon as they began to be a multitude, war would be waged against them and they would have been exterminated. God's

plan, therefore, was to take them away to a place where they could live securely, and grow into a nation, and then to bring them back able to conquer the hordes of Canaan.

There was another reason for getting them away from Canaan. They must grow up separate from the world. They were to be God's people. They were to receive God's law and God's word. From them were to come teachers, singers, prophets. By and by the Messiah, the world's Redeemer, was to be born of this nation. They must be a holy people, with unmixed blood. If they grew up among the Canaanites this could not be. These tribes would mingle with them. They must be taken to some place where there would be no temptation to inter-marriages and social commingling. The Egyptians were proud and exclusive. They would have no associations with any foreigners. In Goshen, then, while under the favor and protection of the king, they were effectually shut up by themselves. They were compelled to

grow up together, and separate from all other people.

There was yet another reason for their removal from Canaan for a time. Canaan was a country of rude and barbaric peoples, without learning, without culture, without the arts and sciences. Egypt was the seat of the world's highest civilization. It had its great libraries, its colleges, its arts and letters, its culture. By dwelling in Egypt the Israelites would become educated. They would be trained and would learn the arts necessary to fit them for self-government and for being the conservators of the revealed law of God and the teachers of the world. We cannot estimate what the Hebrew nation has been to the world, especially through its laws and its religion. If the people had grown up in Canaan they could never have had the influence they attained.

It was God's plan, therefore, that the family of Jacob should be taken away from Canaan to Egypt. This boy coming across

the fields with a basket is to play a most important part in all this great movement.

He did not know it. We hardly ever know when we are being used of God in doing important things. Joseph had been sent on an errand. He was seventeen — bright, beautiful, innocent, happy. His mother was dead. He had only one own brother — Benjamin, four or five years old. He had ten half-brothers, and with these he was unpopular.

One reason for this unpopularity was that he was his father's favorite. Doubtless he was better than his brothers. Then he was Rachel's son — and Jacob loved Rachel most tenderly. Jacob loved Joseph best of his sons and did not hide the fact. Indeed he seems to have taken pains to show it. He gave him a coat which advertised to all that he was his favorite.

Favoritism in a family is most unwise. It is wrong in itself. The dull child, not the bright one, the weak, faulty child, not the strong, perfect one, really needs the

most praise and encouragement, the most help and favor. Then favoritism usually spoils the child, cultivating pride, self-conceit. Not many of us can stand petting, pampering, and flattery. It is unjust to the others, too, to choose one for special preference and distinction. Once more, favoritism naturally draws upon the favorite the hatred and envy of the others.

There was a timid knock at a mother's bedroom door, early one morning. "Is that you, pet?" asked the mother from within. "No; it isn't pet; it's only me," was the pained answer. But the sorrowful tone cured the mother. There was no more a "pet" in that household. There should not be a "pet" in any home.

"Behold, this dreamer cometh." Joseph had had some dreams. His brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. The sun, moon, and stars made obeisance to him. With boyish simplicity he told his dreams, and his brothers never forgave him. The dreams were divine intimations of the

boy's future — they came true by and by. All we need to notice at present, however, is that the dreams and the boy's telling of them made the brothers hate Joseph the more. The merest hints of his present or possible superiority over them made their envy the more bitter.

Sixty miles away these brothers were pasturing their flocks. The old father would know how they fared. So he sent Joseph to carry messages and a basket of good things to them, and to bring back word again. It was a long, lonely journey for a boy of his years, but at last he was near the end of his journey. Far off the brothers saw him coming. They knew him by his coat of bright colors. "Behold, this dreamer cometh," they said, one to another. "Come now, and let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'Some evil beast hath devoured him.'"

Here we must pause and take a lesson on the fearful danger of allowing envious thoughts to stay even an hour in our heart.

Envy grew to murder in these men—brothers, too. We see here the wisdom of St. Paul's counsel, not to let the sun go down upon our wrath. We should instantly crush the merest beginnings of envy. The hour of evening prayer, when we bow at God's feet, should always be a time for getting right all that may have gone wrong in us during the day. Then every feeling of bitterness against any person should be cast out of our heart. It should be a time for forgetting all injury, and unkindness, all hurt done us by anyone.

"Life is too short for hate;
We mingle here but one brief day,
Too brief for what we meant to say,
When it is all too late.

"Life is too short for hate;
The tree is green that soon shall wave
Its leafy plumes above the grave
In that relentless state."

Joseph was not killed. His errand was not yet finished. Instead of a tragedy came a providence. Reuben, one of the brothers,

was not ready for murder. He proposed that they cast the boy into a dry pit. Reuben intended to come and rescue him afterwards. The suggestion was accepted. So they cast Joseph into the pit, and leaving him there, they went to their accustomed meal. "They sat down to eat bread."

But there was an Eye on the weeping, shivering lad, and an Ear that heard his piteous cries in the dark, dank pit. Then there was another providence. The heartless brothers, as they ate and chuckled over their shrewdness in getting the hated dreamer out of their way, looked up and saw a caravan coming. It was going down to Egypt. A bright thought struck one of the brothers. Judah proposed that they sell Joseph to these passing merchants. It would be a good thing for two reasons. They would get rid of the boy's blood—and blood is always a troublesome thing on one's hands. It will not wash off. Besides, there would be a little money in the transaction. So the boy was hurriedly drawn up out of

the pit, and after some parleying with the traders, was sōld to them for twelve dollars and fifty cents.

The caravan moved away, carrying the dreamer farther on his errand. The brothers returned to their unfinished meal. Reuben, who had been waiting apart for an opportunity to rescue Joseph, came, and finding the pit empty, supposed the lad had been killed, and rent his clothes in bitter grief. The other brothers, knowing that some news must be sent to the old father, killed a kid, and dipping the hated coat in the blood, sent it home, innocently explaining: "We found this coat, in this condition, in the field. Does our father think it is his son's coat?" The father recognized it and drew the inference the cruel brothers meant him to draw. "Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces!" So, for more than twenty years he thought, and all the years were filled with sore mourning.

Dropping the thread of the story for the present, let us gather some practical lessons,

as we see the boy carried off to a distant land as a slave.

1. When we say our good-bys at our home doors in the morning, though it be but for a few hours' separation, as we think, we do not know how long it may be ere we shall meet again. Joseph went out from his father's door that morning, on a common errand, for but a few days' absence. We can picture the parting. All the household were much interested in the lad's journey. All sent messages to the absent brothers. The old grandfather Isaac was still living—a very aged man—and he would have messages and a blessing to send. Little Benjamin would have a deep interest in his big brother's journey, and would want to go with him. All the family gathered about the door to see Joseph off, and stood there watching him, calling and waving their good-bys, until he was out of sight. But no one was anxious. In a few days Joseph would be home again. No one dreamed that for more than twenty years that bright

happy face would not be seen, that some of them should never see him again.

We must not miss the lesson. Even our most casual partings may be for years, may be forever. When we part at our doors in the morning—one to go to business, one to school, one on a short journey, others to stay in the home, we do not know when we shall all look again in each other's face. We expect to gather at the table at noon, or round the fireside in the evening,—but are we sure of it? Many go out in the morning who never come home at night.

If Jacob and Joseph and the other members of that family had known that morning that for more than a score of years they would not meet again, would not their parting have been very tender? Yet life is quite as uncertain for us and our households as it was for that patriarchal family. Any hurried good-by may be for years, may be final; surely then it should be loving. We should never separate in an angry or impatient mood, with unforgiveness, bitterness,

misunderstanding. We should not say our good-bys coldly, carelessly, but always with thoughtful love and gentle feeling.

Suppose that the one who goes out should be brought home dead; or should return to find the one dead whom he left at the door, —if the parting were with harsh word or look or thought, how must the surviving one grieve, when sitting by the flower-covered coffin, to remember the last word or look! The flowers then will not atone for the coldness of the parting on the door-step, nor will they take the pang out of the bereft heart. We should make every parting with home loved ones, every briefest good-by, sweet enough, kindly enough, for a last farewell, should it prove to be the last, as it may be.

"If thou dost bid thy friend farewell,
But for one night though that farewell may be –
Press thou his hand in thine.
How canst thou tell how far from thee
Fate or caprice may lead his steps, ere that to-morrow comes ?

Men have been known lightly to turn the corner of a
street,
And days have grown to months,
And months to lagging years, ere they
Have looked in loving eyes again.
Parting at best is underlaid
With tears and pain:
Therefore, lest sudden death should come between,
Or time, or distance, clasp with pressure firm the
hand
Of him who goeth forth:
Unseen, fate goeth, too.
Yea, find thou always time to say some earnest word
Between the idle talk, lest with thee henceforth,
Night and day, regret should walk."

2. We never know when we set out in the morning, what misfortune or calamity may befall us before the night comes. See that happy lad leaving Hebron, and passing on his way to Shechem. He had no apprehension of danger. With a pure heart and a quiet trust in God, he went along without fear. He was expecting a kindly welcome from his brothers,—certainly he never expected for a moment the cruel reception they gave him. After a short visit away, he hoped to return to the old home

where there was so much love for him. Yet see to what fate he was blindly going!

So we all go on continually, unaware of what lies before us. We spend to-day in gladness, not knowing that to-morrow will bring us tears. We move on through the flowers, heedless of danger, not suspecting that at our next step we may fall into some hidden pit. We boast of our sturdy health, our rugged strength, not dreaming that to-morrow we may be stricken down by disease. We rejoice in our prosperity, unconscious of the fact that disaster may come any hour and sweep it all away. We set out on the happy journey, without thought of the possible accident on the rail, which may leave us crippled or dead.

What is the lesson? Should this uncertainty of all human affairs sadden our life? Should we tremble at every step we take lest the next may be into some grief or calamity? No; that is not the lesson. That would take all the joy and all the energy out of life for us. God does not

want us to be unhappy while the sun is shining because by and by it will pass under a cloud. He does not want us to bring back to-morrow's possible shadows to darken our bright to-day. He does not want us to dim and spoil youth's gladness by gloomy forecastings of the trials of old age. He wants us to live in to-day, to enjoy its blessings, and do its work well, though to-morrow may bring calamity. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

How can we do this, you ask, if we know that any bright future has in it possibilities of sudden darkness? Only by calm, quiet, trustful faith in God and obedience to him at every step. We sometimes wish we could see into the future, that we might choose our way and avoid the rough paths. But suppose that Joseph had been told, on his way to Dothan, how his brothers would treat him, and that he would be sold as a slave; would he have gone forward? Would he not have turned back? Then what a wonderful story of providence

would have been spoiled! Joseph himself would have missed all that bright future which lay beyond the period of wrongs and cruelties into which he first plunged. Then think what his people would have missed, what the world would have missed.

It would not be well for us to know what is before us; we would often meddle with God's plans and spoil them, marring our own future and harming others. Nor is it well for us to be made afraid and over-cautious by the thought of our day's experiences. Yet this uncertainty ought to hold us near the side of Christ at all times. Nothing can ever go really wrong with us if he is leading us and we are quietly following him. Though he take us through pain, misfortune, suffering, it is because that is the path to true blessing and good.

3. Take a lesson on the heartlessness of some human nature. When these brothers had cast Joseph into the pit they sat down to eat bread. Not far from where they

were feasting lay their own brother, suffering untold anguish. They had decided not to kill him, but to leave him in this pit to die. They seem to have forgotten that this was no less cruel than if they had slain him outright.

We see how envy freezes out of the heart all warmth of affection, turning it to stone. Unmoved by the thought of their brother's suffering and indifferent to his cries of anguish which rang in their ears, these men sat down to selfish enjoyment. Let us study the picture closely. A boy who had left his happy home only two or three days since, finds himself in a dark pit or tank. He cannot escape out of it. His feet sink in the mire. Slimy creatures creep about him. He can only die.

Does not a like fate befall many a young man in these days? That region was full of these pits; life about us is full of worse pits, deeper because their bottom is hell—into which thousands of young men and young women, too, are cast.

Brothers cast Joseph into this tank. There are brothers who evermore are dragging down their brothers into dark snares. Are we our brothers' keeper? Yes; yet see how many who bear the image of God and who ought to be the loyal guardians of other lives, rest not unless they cause some one to sin. It is a terrible thing to sin, to debauch one's own conscience, to stain one's own soul; it is a far worse thing to cause others to sin, to put the cup to clean lips, to whisper impure, unholy words in innocent ears. Yet there are brothers who are leading brothers into snares and causing the young and innocent to fall into evil pits.

Every drinking saloon is a pit, a thousand times darker and more deadly than Joseph's, into which hundreds of the noble boys and young men of the country are entrapped, never to come out as they went in. Every gambling den is such a pit, where honor and truth and character are the real ventures, where immortal souls are the fortunes lost. Every house of the strange

woman is such a pit. "Her feet go down to death! Her house is the way to hell."

Men hang red lanterns on the streets where there are pitfalls. Red lights should be hoisted over these pitfalls of death which are open everywhere. He who loves his own soul, who loves peace, honor, purity, life, should shun them. Those who fall into them can be rescued only by the strong hand of Almighty God.

But we are not done with this picture. See the brothers feasting while this lad, their own brother, lies yonder in the pit. "How cruel! How heartless!" one says. Yes, but is there no such heartlessness in our own life? The world is full of want, suffering, need. Go where we may, we find anguish and distress. Here, it is sickness. There, the fluttering crape tells of death within. Inside this door it is poverty—little children are crying for bread. Next door it is sin—drunkenness, vice, crime, turning God's blessing of life to cursing.

On all hands are our brothers who have fallen into sin's pits and are perishing there in the darkness. There are homes close to ours where there is no prayer—and that is worse than no bread. There are little children on our streets who are being lured into hell's pitfalls and no one seems to care. This sad, heart-rending picture of the bright, pure, noble boy, in the pit at Dothan, is no strange sight to heaven's angels.

What are we doing? Are we any less heartless than were these inhuman brothers? Do we not sit down to our meals and eat them with relish, unmoved by the cries of hunger that come in at our windows? "Heartless," does any one say they were? Yes; but is much of our Christian charity any better? In one home, feasting, affluence, luxury; at the back gate, beggary timidly knocking. Out in the chill darkness the child of poverty crouches, peering into the brilliant parlors. But where are the hearts that have pity?

Souls are perishing. Young men are being snared in pits of hell. Young women are being lured away to wretchedness and degradation. Children are being entrapped and dragged into pits of shame.

And what is the church doing? What are the greater number of Christian people doing? Are we trying to rescue these ensnared ones? In our own hearts we have Christ and the joy of his love and grace. We sit down to our communion tables and feast on heavenly provision. We sing our songs. We clasp our hands in Christian love. But do the cries of the perishing outside never break upon our ears as we sit there? Do the visions of our brothers and sisters in their peril and woe never flit across our eyes, as we look with rapture into the blessed face of Jesus? There is wonderful response to calls for physical relief when people are in need. Christian people open their hands to the hungry. But there are sorer, bitterer needs. In sin's dark pits where they have fallen, there are

dying ones, with none to care. Is there no pity in our heart for these? They are all about us—brothers, fallen into pits, brothers, cast into pits by brothers, and with none to heed their cries. If we found a dog, or an ox, or a horse, fallen into a pit, we would hasten to lift it out. Shall we pass by our brothers and not lend a hand to save them?

One tells of a man in a New England town who walks about always with his head bent down as if in sad dejection. Once this man was captain of an ocean vessel. One day, as his ship was speeding through the waters, a signal of distress was observed some distance away. A glass was turned to the spot, and it was seen that there was a man on the piece of wreck. To go to his rescue the ship would have to be stopped and turned back, losing much time. "No," said the captain; "some other vessel will pick him up." He speeded on and was in port in good time, and was commended for his swift passage.

But the captain could not get out of his mind the memory of that signal of distress out there on the wild sea, and the sight, through the glass, of that one man on the piece of wreck—left there to perish. By day and by night that picture haunted him. He has never gone to sea since; and when he walks on the street, people know him by his downcast face, and remember the pathetic story of his last voyage.

As we are hurrying on these busy days, do we see no signals of distress on life's broad sea? Do we hear no cries—no wails of anguish from souls that are out on the angry waves? Do we heed the signals and hearken to the cries? Do we turn away from our business, our pleasure, our ease, our money-getting, our personal ambitions, to carry rescue to those who are perishing? Or do we hurry on and say that we have no time for these things—no time to try to save our brothers, to lift out of sin's pits those who have fallen into them, to wipe away a tear? If we do not reach out our

hand to help, may not our sorrow in eternity be the memory of cries of distress unheeded? May not the visions of perishing ones neglected haunt us forever?

Listen to the words of Scripture: "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, 'Behold, we knew it not;' doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth the soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

JOSEPH—SLAVE AND IN PRISON

He sent a man before them;
Joseph was sold for a servant:
His feet they hurt with fetters;
He was laid in chains of iron.
—*Psalms 105 : 17, 18.*

Every soul has a climate of its own, or rather *is* a climate.—*Henri Amiel.*

II

JOSEPH—SLAVE AND IN PRISON

A MODERN writer has a story entitled "Hands Off" which illustrates providence in the life of Joseph. It represents a man in another stage of existence, looking down upon the Hebrew lad in the hands of the Midianites. Being an active, ingenious lad, Joseph escaped from the caravan on the first night after his brothers had sold him. He had just reached the outer edge of the camp when a yellow dog began to bark and awakened the men who were in charge of him, and he was returned to captivity.

However the onlooker wanted to kill the dog before he had awakened the camp. Then Joseph would have got away and would have reached home in safety. Great sorrow and suffering would have been

avoided. But the onlooker's guardian said, "Hands off." And to let him see the evil of interfering, he took him to a world where he could try the experiment and see its results. There he killed the dog. Joseph reached home in safety, his father rejoiced, his brothers were comforted. It certainly seemed a better way than the other. But when the famine came on, there had been no Joseph in Egypt to foretell it and to prepare for it, and there was no food laid up in the storehouses. Palestine and Egypt were devastated by starvation. Great numbers died and the savage Hittites destroyed those whom the famine had spared. Civilization was set back centuries. Egypt was blotted out. Greece and Rome remained in a barbarous state. The history of the whole world was changed and countless evils came—all because a man in his ignorant wisdom killed a dog, saving a boy from present trouble, to his own and the world's future great loss.

We would better keep our hands off

God's providences. Many a beautiful plan of his is spoiled by human meddling. Peter wanted to keep Jesus back from his cross. Suppose he had done so, what would have been the result? No doubt, many a time, love has kept a life back from hardship, sacrifice, and suffering, thereby blighting or marring a destiny, a plan of God. We are likely to pity the boy Joseph as we see him enter his period of humiliation, and as we read of his being sold as a slave, then cast into irons. But we see well that if human pity could have rescued him from this sad part of his life, the glorious part that followed, with all its blessed service to the world, would have been lost.

Few truths are more sustaining to Christian faith than this, that our times are in God's hands. We forget it too often and sometimes we fret when life brings hard things to endure, when our own plans are broken. But some day we shall see that God knows best. The following lines by James Buckham are very suggestive :

How oft, O God, when we have wept in vain
O'er thy decrees, and blurred with fretful tears
The heavenward window of the soul, appears
Thy purpose sweet and wise, in after years,
Like sunshine streaming through the veils of rain!

If we had had our way—if thou had'st given
The lesser good in our impleading hands,
Withholding larger; if the small demands
Of human choice, that sees nor understands
Life's broader issues, had prevailed with heaven;

If we had never wept, nor known the keen,
Pure, cleansing pain of sorrow's sacred fire—
The broken tie, the unfulfilled desire—
Our sluggish lives had never risen higher,
But, fixed in self, had ever selfish been.

But thou hast led us out of self, hast shown
How love's great circle rounds from soul to soul,
How sorrow makes us quick to others' dole
And binds each unit in the larger whole
Of life and love, complete in thee alone.

O God, thy thought infolds us all! The days
Ev'n of this brief, imperfect life attest,
Ere they are spent, thy will is ever best.
Oh, may we in thy love and wisdom rest,
For thou dost know the end of all our days!

Joseph was seventeen when the caravan bore him off, as a slave, to Egypt. He was thirty when called from prison to become

prime minister of Pharaoh. The whole period of his humiliation was therefore, thirteen years. The three points on which we are to fix our thoughts are—his slave life; his great temptation; his prison life. The special thing to mark is that Joseph went through all these experiences unhurt. This is a secret worth learning—how to meet injustice, wrong, cruelty, inhuman treatment, temptation, misfortune, so as to receive no harm from the experience. Let us look at each of the three phases of Joseph's humiliation, to see how he bore himself so as to rob them of their bitterness and their power of harming and to extract from each of them blessing and good.

Joseph's slave life was humiliating. It is always hard to be a slave; not to be one's own, to belong to another, to be driven to grinding toil, to bow beneath heavy burdens bound upon one's shoulders, to feel the lash of the taskmaster, not to be able to claim the fruit of one's own toil, to serve as a mere animal, bought and sold in the market.

Joseph was a slave. His brothers sold him to the traders. In the shambles of Egypt Potiphar saw him, looked him over as one would a horse, and bought him, paying, no doubt, a handsome profit to the merchants who had brought him down from Canaan. Think how galling was all this to a boy of Joseph's free spirit! Think, too, of the sense of wrong which filled his heart as he remembered the treatment he had received from his brothers. They had torn him away from his home. They had been about to kill him. They had treated him with heartless cruelty. They had sold him as a slave. Surely it was hard to keep one's heart sweet and free from bitterness, with such a sense of injustice in the soul.

But add to this the hardness of the new condition in which Joseph found himself. He was among strangers. Not a face he had ever seen passed before him. He was utterly alone. He had not a friend in all the land. He was not free to go as he pleased, to do what he liked, to follow his

own tastes. Many a young man lands in this country poor, friendless, alone, but with a brave heart filled with noble impulses, free to make what he will of his life, and soon is on the highway to success. But Joseph was a slave. Potiphar had bought him. He was in bonds. It is hard to conceive of a condition more discouraging. It was a sore test of character to which Joseph was exposed. The treatment he had received from his brothers tended to make him bitter. His present circumstances seemed enough to crush his spirit. Some men in such experience of injustice, wrong, treachery, and falseness, would have lost all faith in humanity, becoming soured. There are people who have had not the tenth part of Joseph's trouble but who are embittered against the world and denounce it as cold and heartless and ungrateful. Other men there are who, having been wronged, grow hard and vindictive, and live only to repay the injustice they have received with like injustice — blow for blow. Still others

sullenly surrender to the injuries they have received and with broken spirit creep through life, like wrecks drifting on the sea, pitiable spectacles to men and angels.

Few men there are who pass through such experiences of injustice and cruelty as those Joseph met and keep their heart sweet and gentle, their faith in God bright and clear and their spirit brave and strong. It showed the healthiness and wholesomeness of Joseph's nature that he passed through the galling and trying experiences of his humiliation unhurt. He was not soured toward men. He did not grow morbid, sullen, or disheartened. Though a slave, he accepted his position with cheerfulness, and entered heartily into his new life, doing his duties so well that he soon became overseer in his master's house. He wasted no time or strength in weeping over his misfortunes. He did not grieve over his wrongs nor exhaust himself in self-pity—one of the most miserable and unmanly of emotions. He did not burn out the love of

his heart in vindictive and resentful feelings. He did not brood over his wrongs. He looked forward and not back, out and not in.

A poet writes of one who had had bitter experiences, that the darkness crept into her heart and darkened her eyes. The darkness about Joseph's life was not allowed to enter his heart. This was one of the great secrets of his victorious living. The light within him continued to burn pure and clear. With hatred all about him, he kept love in his heart. Enduring injuries, wrongs, and injustices, his spirit was forgiving. With a thousand things that tended to discourage and dishearten him, to break his spirit, he refused to be discouraged. Because other men lived unworthily was but a stronger reason why he should live worthily. Because he was treated cruelly and wickedly was fresh reason why he should give to others about him the best service of love and unselfishness. That his condition was hard was to

him a new motive for living heroically and nobly.

So we find the spirit of Joseph unbroken under all that was galling and crushing in his circumstances. The lesson cannot be too urgently pressed. Many people find life hard. Sometimes wrong and injustice make the days bitter. Sometimes the atmosphere of daily life is one of strife, petty persecution, miserable fault-finding, incessant opposition, nagging, criticism. Home life ought to be ideally loving, inspiring, encouraging, helpful, full of all kindness and grace. Yet there are homes little better than Joseph's, where instead of love are envy, selfishness, bitterness. There are those, too, who must live continually amid unjust opposition and antagonism. There are those whose life is little better than that of a slave, with grinding toil half-requited, driven as by cruel taskmasters to severe and rigorous service. There are those who are pressed on all sides by human selfishness, who suffer from the dishonesty,

the meanness, the cupidity, the selfishness of others.

Let us not fail to get the lesson. The problem of life is to keep the heart warm and kindly amid all injustice and wrong; to keep the spirit brave and cheerful in the midst of all that is hard in life's circumstances and conditions; to be true and right and strong in all moral purpose and deed, however others may act toward us. Our inner life should not be affected by our external experiences. Right is right, no matter what others about us may do. We must be true, no matter if all the world is false, even false to us. We must be unselfish and loving though even our nearest friends prove selfish and cruel to us. We must keep our spirit strong, cheerful and hopeful, though adversities and misfortunes seem to leave us nothing of the fruit of all our labors. A young man must do his work well, making the most and best of his life, though compelled to serve for most inadequate wages. In a word we are to live victoriously,

truly, nobly, sweetly, cheerfully, songfully, in spite of whatever may be uncongenial in our condition.

This is the lesson from the first period of Joseph's humiliation. This is the lesson of all Christian life. We should not let the outside darkness into our soul. We should seek to be delivered from all morbidness and all unwholesomeness. We should not allow anything to crush us. Though a slave as to our condition, our spirit should be free.

We read that Joseph bore himself so genially, and did his work so well, and was so capable, so true, so trustworthy, that Potiphar left all he had in his hand; "he knew not aught that was with him, save the bread which he did eat." Joseph would never have won such a success if he had given up to discouragement, if he had brooded over his wrongs, if he had sulked and complained, if he had spent his time in vain regrets or in vindictive feelings. We should learn the lesson, and it is worth

learning — it is life's highest and best lesson. It is the victory of the faith in Christ which overcometh the world.

Another part of Joseph's humiliation was his temptation. He had been in Potiphar's house for several years. He had lived so worthily and wrought so faithfully that he had his master's fullest confidence and had risen to the first place among all the servants. We can think of the boy's dreams of greatness as again coming into the young man's heart as he found himself so honored. His temptation was, by an intrigue with Potiphar's wife, to rise to yet higher prominence. He would throw off his slave's chains and become a man of rank in the land. This, and not the appeal to low and base passion, was the chief element in the temptation to Joseph.

We may think, too, of the circumstances which made the trial the harder. Joseph was away from home and friends. No eye of mother, father or sister was upon him,

inspiring him to all that was pure, true, and noble. We do not realize what a restraint against wrong-doing and all that is base and ignoble we have in the expectation of our friends for us, their belief in us. Joseph was in a heathen land, too, where the standard of morals was low and where such intrigues were common. We do not realize how much we are helped in our virtue by the high ideals we find about us and by the knowledge that certain lapses and sins would expose us to disgrace and to the condemnation of society. Joseph had none of these social restraints to help him to be strong and pure.

But he met the temptation on far higher grounds, on grounds of pure principle. Note his answer to the solicitation of his temptress: "Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath put all that he hath into my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how

then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Two motives appear in these words of Joseph's. One is loyalty to his master. Potiphar had trusted him, trusted him implicitly with all that he had. Could he now be guilty of such a base wrong to the man who had placed such confidence in him? To Joseph's mind such an act would be treachery to his friend. In the face of the flattering solicitation of this woman high in rank, unmoved by her passionate temptation, regardless of the consequences which offending her might bring upon him, he kept his eye fixed on his duty and wavered not, but flung the temptress from him and tore himself away —his soul unstained.

The other motive which saved him was his loyalty to God. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" All sin is sin against God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," said David in his penitence. Cruelty to an animal is

sin against God. Treachery to Potiphar was sin against God. All our acts have reference to God. Sins against innocence and purity are sins against God. We can never get away from our relation to God in any act of our life. In all such temptations as this of Joseph's, men should remember that while to yield would be treason to another it would also be sin against God.

Another element of Joseph's nobleness of character in this case appears in his silence under false accusation. His temptress, in her disappointment and anger, charged him to her husband with most dishonorable behavior. Under this accusation Joseph was seized and cast into irons. But he said not a word to Potiphar to turn suspicion upon the accusing wife. He seems to have thought still of Potiphar's honor, and rather than lay a stain upon it he would go to the dungeon under the false charge, leaving to God the vindication of his own honor and the proving of his own innocence. It has

been said, "For his purity you will find his equal, one among a thousand; for his mercy scarcely one." By a word he could have told Potiphar the whole story, but rather than speak that word he suffered the dishonoring accusation to rest undenied.

Nothing is harder than to live under false charges which bring upon one suspicion and condemnation, which hinder one's advancement, and which by breaking silence one could cast off. There are persons who do live thus—bearing reproach and odium to shield others. Sometimes it seems to be a duty, but it is very hard. Joseph had resisted temptation in order to be loyal to Potiphar; now Potiphar thinks him guilty of the very baseness which for love of him he had scorned to commit. But in all this Joseph kept his heart sweet and loving.

Sometimes it costs very dearly to be true to God. Joseph lay now in a dungeon. But his loss through doing right was nothing in comparison with what he would have lost had he done the wickedness to which

he was tempted. His prison gloom, deep as it was, was as noonday, compared with what would have been the darkness of his soul under the blight of evil and the bitterness of remorse. The chains that hung about him in his dungeon were but like feathers in comparison with the chains which would have bound his soul, had he yielded to the temptation. Though in a prison, his feet hurt by fetters, he was a free man because his conscience was free, and his heart was pure. It is better to suffer any loss, any cost, any sacrifice, than to sin against God. No fear of consequences should ever drive us to do a wrong thing. Better be hurled down from a high place for doing right than win worldly honor by doing wrong. Better lose our right hand than lose our purity of soul. Better rot in prison than be eaten up by remorse. It was the prayer of a girl queen, written with a diamond point on her castle window, "Keep me pure; make others great." That is the lesson of Joseph's victory over temp-

tation; anything—dishonor, loss, dungeon, death—before sin.

Another phase of Joseph's humiliation was, his prison life.

> "His feet they hurt with fetters;
> He was laid in chains of iron."

It was a terrible blight upon his young life to be thus hurled into a dungeon. We can imagine his thoughts when he found himself shut away in the darkness and bound with chains. This, then, was the reward of being true to God and to duty! He had resisted sin, and here he was in irons, while his guilty temptress was posing as an injured woman, receiving compassion and enjoying luxury.

However bitter the prison may have been at first to Joseph, we know that here as before he soon rose to honor. He was not yet crushed. The noble soul within him rose superior to all the effects of the misfortune and the wrong under which he was suffering. He did not lie down and despair.

Soon his old aptitude for meeting life with courage and hope showed itself. "The keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison." "The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand." So we find Joseph always superior to his condition and circumstances.

There is a story of one who during some time of persecution was cast into a deep dungeon, far underground. Once only each day, and for but half an hour, did the outer light stream down into the darkness of the prison. But this good man found an old iron nail and a piece of stone among the rubbish on his cell floor. Using the nail for a chisel and the piece of stone for a mallet, he carved on his prison wall, during the moments when the light streamed in, a rude figure of the Saviour on his cross.

So should we do in our life prisons. Thus did Joseph. He did not hew any figures on the stone walls that shut him in;

but on the walls of his own heart he cut the figures of hope, joy and love. His manhood was not in chains. The fetters did not hurt his soul. He was victorious over all the wrong, the injustice, the false accusation, the suffering. Indeed he found his period of humiliation a great time of growth, of discipline, of training. At length he was summoned from the prison to sit beside the king; and so well was he fitted for greatness and for wise ruling, that his head did not grow dizzy when he stood on this pinnacle of honor and fame.

So we get from this part of our story the duty of victoriousness in all life's conditions. What is the secret? Be true to God. Be true to yourself. Be true to your fellow men. The record tells us: "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." This was when he was a slave. Then of the time of his prison life we read: "The Lord was with Joseph, and shewed kindness unto him, and that which he did,

the Lord made it to prosper." Verily, if we are true to God, God will bless us, and even our misfortunes he will use to train us for larger, better, nobler, more useful life.

A writer tells the story of the rose of Jericho—how it flourishes in lack of all things wherein plants delight—in the hot desert, in the rocky crevices, by the dusty wayside, in the rubbish heap. Even more, the fierce sirocco tears it from its place and flings it far out upon the ocean, and there, driven by the storms and tossed by the salt waves, it still lives and grows. So should we grow in any and all circumstances, where we may be cast—in sorrow, in hardship, in misfortune, in suffering. A deathless life is in us, and we should be unconquerable. Christ is with us; Christ's life is in us; nothing should be allowed to crush us. Live near the heart of Christ and the world's power will not hurt you, nor the world's darkness dim your soul's light.

"Noble souls, through dust and heat
Rise from disaster and defeat
The stronger;
And, conscious still of the divine
Within them, lie on earth supine
No longer."

FROM PRISON TO PALACE

Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon.—*Genesis 41 : 14.*

I like the man who faces what he must
With step triumphant and a heart of cheer —
Who fights the daily battle without fear;
Sees his hopes fail, yet keeps unfaltering trust
That God is God; that, somehow, true and just,
His plans work out for mortals; not a tear
Is shed when fortune, which the world holds dear,
Falls from his grasp. Better, with love, a crust,
Than living in dishonor; envies not
Nor loses faith in man; but does his best,
Nor even murmurs at his humbler lot,
But with a smile and words of hope, gives zest
To every toiler. He alone is great
Who, by a life heroic, conquers fate.

—*Sarah K. Bolton.*

III

FROM PRISON TO PALACE

THE story reads like a romance. In the morning, Joseph lay in prison. He had been there probably three years. He knew of nothing that gave any hope of release. In the evening he was wearing the king's ring, was arrayed in vestures of fine linen, had a gold chain about his neck and was honored as next to the king. It seems too strange to be true, yet it was true.

We may think a moment of the man in the prison. He was not a criminal. He was in prison on false charges. Let us beware lest we do injustice to others by believing false things about them. What is it in human nature that inclines people to believe evil of others? Shall we not strive to have the love that thinketh no evil? In the story of Joseph we know the other side,

and we see a man with a white soul, though under the shadow of a black charge. May it not be so with some other one—some one we know—of whom people allege dishonorable things, but who in God's sight is innocent, with clean soul? We should plead for justice, for charity, toward all. We should shut our ears to the insinuations and whisperings of the slanderer's tongue. It was a lie that put the felon's garb and chain on Joseph, robbed him of his good name, and turned the dungeon key upon him. Be slow to believe an accusation against another. One false mouth can destroy the reputation won by a lifetime of worthy deeds.

Joseph was in prison under a false charge. The very treachery against his master which his noble nature scorned to commit, his master was made to believe he had committed. Yet he sealed his lips and went to the dungeon without one word of self-exculpation. He could not exculpate himself without bringing scandal and ruin upon

his master's home ; and he was silent. This was a case when silence was hard, but when silence was noble.

Any one of us may become the innocent victim of calumny. Blameless, we may have to endure false accusation. As Christians, what should we do in such a case? Of course, not all cases are alike. In some instances vindication may be possible, and it may be our duty to seek it. But there may be cases, like Joseph's, when we cannot free ourselves from false accusation without bringing dishonor and suffering upon others. Then it may be our duty, like Joseph, too, to suffer in silence and in patience. He left all in God's hands, doing nothing himself to right the wrong. There is a verse in the thirty-seventh Psalm which gives a lesson and a promise:

"Commit thy way unto the Lord;
Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.
And he shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light,
And thy judgment as the noonday."

Joseph committed his way into the Lord's

hands that terrible day. He kept his own hands off. He was three years under the black cloud, but then he came forth into the light and there was not a stain on his soul. We may safely leave our vindication to God.

Those were hard years for Joseph—indeed, all those thirteen years were, from the day the boy was sold to the passing caravan, until he was sent for by Pharaoh, and lifted to honor. But hard as they were they did not hurt him. There are little flowers that grow through all the coldest winter, under the snows, keeping sweet and beautiful beneath the deepest drifts, coming out in the spring days, when the snow melts away, unhurt, as lovely and fragrant as if they had been sheltered in a conservatory. So it was that the life of Joseph remained gentle, beautiful and sweet under all the terrible trials of those years—wrong, cruelty, heartlessness, injustice, inhumanity—from brothers, too ; then slavery, degradation ; then false accusation, chains. Some of us

can hardly keep sweet under little imaginary slights, and the common frictions and microscopical hurts and injustices of fairly easy conditions. Some of us grow morbid and misanthropic if a friend omits some simple amenity.

The noble bearing of Joseph teaches us to be superior to all circumstances and conditions, to all unkind or unjust treatment. That is the great lesson of life. If you are going to be affected by every change of social temperature, by every variation of experience—your spirits running up and down like the mercury in the thermometer, with the fluctuations of the atmosphere, you will have a sorry time of it. That is not living. But we have the secret of a divine life within us. We must live unaffected by circumstances. Morbidness is sickly living. Misanthropy is unworthy of a being in whose heart human blood pulses, especially in a heart in which Christ's life throbs. Discouragement is undivine. We must be strong in the grace of God. We must be

unconquerable through him that loved us. We must put misfortunes, adversities, personal injuries, sufferings, trials, under our feet, and tread ever upward on them. We must conquer ourself too—the evil that is in us we must subjugate. That is the way to grow.

> "We rise by the things that are under our feet;
> By what we have mastered of good or gain;
> By the pride deposed, and the passion slain,
> And the vanquished ills that we hourly meet."

Remember, your problem in living is to keep sweet, to keep your heart gentle, brave, strong, loving, full of hope, under the worst that the years can bring you of injustice, hardship, suffering, and trial. That is what Joseph did. Then when he was suddenly wanted for a great duty, he did not fail.

Something went wrong one day in the big world above Joseph's dungeon. There was trouble in Pharaoh's palace. Two high officials were careless and they were hurried off to prison. Why is this related in the

Bible? Because it was one of the links in the wonderful chain of providences by which Joseph was at last brought to his place of power.

We do not know what circumstances or events of that vast complex network of things about us will help change our destiny. "God is always coming down to us through unlikely paths, meeting us unexpectedly." We see how important to Joseph was the coming to the prison of Pharaoh's two officers. Let us walk reverently along all life's paths. We know not what trivial occurrence, any day, may affect all our after course unto the end. Who knows but the casual meeting with some one to-day may have great good for us long years hence? The touching of Joseph's life by these prisoners from the palace was a link in the chain by which Joseph was lifted out. The person you meet casually to-morrow may have in his hand the key which some day will open a prison for you and lead you to liberty.

Yet it seemed for a long time as if nothing would come of the touching of Joseph's destiny by this hand from the outside. Joseph told the meaning of the men's dreams, and in three days what he had said came true. As the chief butler went out happy from the prison, to resume his old duties, he parted very affectionately from his friend. Joseph had said to him: "Think on me, when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house." No doubt the butler promised to do so. Oh yes, certainly he would remember his prison friend! But here are the pathetic words with which the record closes: "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him."

He was restored to his place in the palace. He wore again the insignia of office. He was again in the blaze and brilliance of the royal presence. Waiting in his prison, Joseph hoped each day to be released through the strong influence of his friend

at court—waited and hoped and yet the days went on without bringing any token that he was remembered. Two years passed, and still Joseph languished in the darkness, wearing his chains. The chief butler, who had been so profuse in his promises to remember him, forgot him.

This old-time Egyptian officer has many successors in all ages. We are all quite ready to condemn his ingratitude; but do we never repeat his sin? In the time when help comes to us, or deliverance, or favor, our hearts are warm with grateful feeling. We will never forget this kindness, we say with sincere intention. But do we never forget it? We probably remember injuries done to us. It is hard for many people to forget a wrong. "I forgive him, but I never can forget his treatment," we hear persons say. Slights, and cutting words, and unkindnesses, and neglects—how well we remember these! Some of us nurse them and cherish their memory. But have we as faithful recollection of

favors, kind words, comforts given in trouble, help in need? "Men too often write the record of grudges in marble and of favors in water."

Let us not fail to get the lesson. Let us write the record of hurts and wrongs done to us in water and of kindnesses shown to us in stone. And stop a moment right now, and think. Is there some one somewhere, suffering, shut in, mayhap enduring wrong, bearing a heavy load, to whom once you gave a promise of sympathy, of a visit, of an effort to help or relieve—a promise you have forgotten? When we find persons in distress or sorrow or adversity or crushed by some heavy blow, we are quite apt to promise them love and thought and friendly help. But do we always keep our promises? Our words cheer them and they look for our coming again, and watch and hope for the help we so eagerly said we would give; but how often do we forget, just as the butler forgot Joseph? Is there not some one to whom you spoke in strong

words of sympathy, in a time when your heart was warm? You meant to call again very soon. You meant to lend a hand to help the weary struggler. You meant to try to give or secure the relief the person needed. But out in the busy world you forgot it. "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him." For two years he forgot him.

There are forgotten Josephs everywhere, to whom promises have been made but not kept. We should recall those to whom we once spoke so freely, so earnestly. Have we ever called since? Have we ever done anything to give the comfort we promised to give? Think of the disappointment we have caused, the long weary, waiting for kindness expected, but which we have forgotten to render.

We do not know what power there is in our heart to bless others, to make the world a little brighter for them, the burden a little lighter, the path a little easier. All about us in life are dungeons in which suffering

Josephs lie in chains. It is dark about them. The air is not sweet. Bird songs do not break in upon the heavy silence. They are lonely. You and I, out in the free air, hear the bird songs, and quaff the nectar of human happiness, and have joy and love for our portion. Let us not forget the Josephs in their prisons. They look for tokens from us to assure them that they are not forgotten. They expect our visits, some proofs at least of kindly thought, some effort to give relief or comfort. You have in your heart's full cup that which will give strength and cheer. Do not think it a small thing to put a little new hope or courage or gladness into a fainting human heart. It is helping God warm this world. It is helping Christ save a soul. Emily Dickinson writes beautifully:

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

But now a strange thing happened. As it came out, it was better for Joseph, in the end, that the butler did not speak for him to the king for so long a time. Had he made intercession for him at once, and had Pharaoh listened to the plea and set Joseph free, what would have been the result? Joseph could not have gone back to Potiphar's house, and would probably have been sold away from the city—for he was still Potiphar's slave. Or possibly he might have been set free to return to Hebron. In any case he would not likely have been within reach when he was sought for to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

Consider the consequences. His career would have been toward obscurity. Perhaps he would never have been heard of again, and then this charming story would never have been written. Then Pharaoh's dreams would have had no interpreter. The years of plenty would have come and passed, leaving no storehouses filled for the famine years which followed. In the terri-

ble distress of those years the family of Jacob, with its holy seed, might have perished from the earth.

But the ingratitude of the butler, inexcusable as it was, left Joseph in the prison, suffering unjustly, but waiting close at hand, until the moment came when he would be needed for a work of stupendous importance. While God's purposes were slowly ripening in the world outside, Joseph's character also was ripening into strength and self-discipline within the dungeon walls.

So we see again the wonderful providence of God—how every link of the chain fits into its own place with most delicate precision. Nothing comes a moment too soon, nothing lags, coming a minute late. God's providence is like God's nature. Among the stars there are no haphazard movements. Men calculate transits, eclipses, conjunctions, a thousand years ahead, and know to the smallest fraction of a second that the calculations will be veri-

fied. The sun never rises late. No star sets too early. So in providence everything comes in its set time. God's clock is never a second slow. Can this be chance? Can nature's perfect adjustments be chance? Can the wonderful beauty and beneficence of providence be chance, a mere endless succession of happy, blessed coincidences? Oh no, there is a God whose hand moves the machinery of the universe, and that God is our Father. There is a heart beating at the center of all things. He who has ears to hear cannot but hear it.

Thus in Joseph's life every smallest event was wrought into the final result with perfect adaptation. The inhuman wickedness of his brothers in selling him, the foul lie of Potiphar's wife which sent him to a dungeon, the ingratitude of the butler which left him friendless and forgotten for two years in prison—all these wrongs from others were by the divine touch transmuted into blessings.

As we read this story we see all this in

the life of Joseph. Shall we suppose that Joseph's life was in God's hand in any exceptional sense? Is there any less of God's providence in our life than there was in the life of that Hebrew lad? He did not see the providence at the time—not until afterwards did the dark clouds disclose their silver lining, or the rough iron fetters reveal themselves as gold. Not until afterwards shall we see that our disappointments, hardships, trials, misfortunes, and the wrongs done to us by others are all made parts of God's providence toward us—not until afterwards, but the "afterwards" is sure if only we firmly and faithfully follow Christ and keep our own hands off. God works slowly and is never in a hurry.

The light which shines from this story of Joseph ought to shine into a great many lives to-day with its beam of cheer and hope for those who are waiting amid discouraging circumstances. The heart of God is beating in each life's experiences and the hand of God is working—only the

hour for full revealing has not yet come on the dial of the clock of God.

At last came the time for Joseph's deliverance and exaltation. Pharaoh had a double dream. It was not an ordinary dream—it was God's way of revealing the future to the king, that he might be a true father to his people. Seven fat cows feeding in a meadow; seven lean and poor cows standing by the Nile. The seven fat cattle eaten up by the seven lean, which are lean as ever, afterwards. Seven rank, good ears of corn; seven thin, blasted ears. The thin ears devour the rank ears and are thin as ever.

The dream troubled the king. He sent for Egypt's famed wise men, dream-interpreters, but they gave him no light. Now, at last, after two years of ungrateful forgetting, the butler remembered his fault and told Pharaoh the story of the Hebrew slave in the prison who had interpreted his own dream. Swiftly runs the messenger to the prison, and Joseph is called into the

presence of the king. He is thirty years old. He has been thirteen years in Egypt, as slave and prisoner. Now his time for honor and for service has come. This is the hour, and here is the duty for which all his former life has been a preparation.

Pharaoh tells his dreams. Listen to Joseph's answer. A vain man would have had his head turned by such a sudden blaze of royal splendor about him and would have spoken boastfully. But Joseph speaks with the humility of an unspoiled child. "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer." We should not miss the lesson, we who teach others, we to whom perplexed ones come with their questions. We should not seek to show our own wisdom, but should hide ourself away and point to God as the One who is the source of whatever wisdom our lips may speak. "It is not in me—God will give you an answer."

Then Joseph told the king what the dream meant. It was God's message to Pharaoh—a glimpse into the future. There would be

seven years of great plenty in Egypt, and after these, seven years of sore famine. And the famine would be so grievous that it would eat up all the food of the abundant years. Joseph went on to advise the king what to do—to find a wise man and let him gather the extra food of the seven years of plenty and lay it up in great storehouses to meet the needs of the coming years of famine.

At once the king appointed Joseph himself to this place of honor and trust. He took off his signet ring and put it on Joseph's hand, thus giving him almost royal authority. He arrayed him in vestures of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck—insignia of princely rank. He caused him to ride in a chariot next to the king's own, in a royal procession along the streets. He gave him a new name—Zaphnath-paaneah, which meant "bread of life"—in allusion to Joseph's great service in saving the land from famine. He gave to him also in marriage a daughter of one of Egypt's

priests, thus elevating him into the priestly caste.

All this honor came suddenly to Joseph. Was it not worth waiting for? The way seemed long from the pit at Dothan to the steps of Egypt's throne. The dreams of the Hebrew boy were long in coming true. The experiences were hard and tended to crush and destroy the young life. Those thirteen years out of the golden prime of life seemed wasted. Yet, we should notice that all this time and in all these experiences God was training the man for his work. The butler's dream came true in three days, but there was not much of it when it was fulfilled. It took thirteen years for Joseph's dreams to be realized, because the dreams meant so much. If a man's work is of small importance, he can be prepared for it in a little while. But when he has a great mission to fulfil, it requires a long time to fit him for it. Let no one grow impatient in God's school, however slow the advancement may be. The longer time God takes

with your training and the harder the discipline is, the larger will be your life when the work is finished.

No doubt Joseph recognized the providence of God in all those slow years of his life. He believed that he was being prepared for his mission. This was the secret of his unconquerable hope and courage and of all his sweet life, in the trying experiences of those years. He knew he was in God's school. Providence was a Bible to him. The same may become just as true in our life as it was in his. We may accept our condition as God's appointment for us. Then we may read God's will for us as clearly in each day's unfoldings as if the divine finger wrote it out for us on a sheet of paper under our eye. We shall cease then our restless struggling. We shall no longer fight so for our own way, but will take God's way.

Thus and thus only can any one be what God made him to be and do what God made him to do in this world. God has a plan

for every life, but we can fulfil that plan only by reading daily the little page of God's Bible which he writes for us on the tablet of the day's providences. To be able to say always in disappointment, in sorrow, in loss, in the suffering of injuries at the hands of others, in the midst of pain and trial, "God is teaching me some new lesson, training me for some new duty, bringing out in me some new beauty of character," is to live as we should live. One incident left out in Joseph's strange career would have broken the chain and spoiled all. So it is in every life; all the events are necessary to fit us for the place for which God is preparing us.

We may learn a lesson from the system which Joseph adopted of providing in the years of plenty for the years of famine. In every one's life there are seasons of abundance, of rare plenty, and then there will come also, surely, seasons that are empty and full of need. It is wisdom's part to gather the avails of the full years

and lay them up in store for the empty years.

Youth is a time of plenty. It brings opportunities for education, for study, for reading, for self-discipline, for the formation of habits, for the culture of character, for the establishment of good principles and for careful training and preparation for life's work or business. If the plenty is allowed to run to waste, if the season of youth is not improved, after life can bring only misfortune and failure.

In the years of health and prosperity, we should lay by a little of our plenty for the "rainy day" that will certainly come—the day of sickness, when the hands cannot work and the doctor's bill must be paid. Through the years of joy we should lay up in our heart the divine comfort for the years of sorrow which will come. Through youth and manhood or womanhood we should be ever filling storehouses to draw from in old age. In the present life we must lay up treasures in heaven for the life

to come. In the days when the gospel's grace is falling like sunshine about us, we must receive it into our heart, or we shall perish in the eternal years of darkness.

AN INTERPRETER FOR GOD

Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.—*Genesis 41 : 15, 16.*

A nameless man, amid a crowd
That thronged the daily mart,
Let fall a word of hope and love,
Unstudied, from the heart,

A whisper on the tumult thrown,
A transitory breath;
It raised a brother from the dust,
It saved a soul from death.

—*Charles Mackay.*

IV

AN INTERPRETER FOR GOD

JOSEPH was an interpreter for God. There are two instances recorded in which he made known the meaning of dreams. The first was in the prison in Egypt. Two officials from the king's palace were among his fellow prisoners. Joseph had risen to influence in the prison. "The Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison," is the way the Bible puts it. "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison." So when these distinguished prisoners from the palace came into the dungeon, they fell under Joseph's care.

One morning when Joseph was going his rounds he found these men sad. He had a sympathetic heart, and he asked them,

"Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?" They told him that they had each dreamed a dream the night before, and there was no one to act as interpreter for them. Promptly he said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you." The men in turn told him their dreams, and Joseph told them the interpretation. He was God's interpreter to them, showing them what God's word for them was.

The other case was that of Pharaoh. He had two dreams in one night. In the morning his spirit was troubled — he wished to know what his dreams meant. He called for Egypt's wise men, who were supposed to understand dreams, but none of them could interpret the king's dreams. Then it flashed upon the memory of the chief butler that two years before, a Hebrew slave, in Potiphar's prison, had interpreted his dream, and that it came about as the young man said it would. Soon Joseph stood before Pharaoh, listening to a recital of the dreams that so troubled the king.

"Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." Joseph's answer reveals his humility. It shows also his courage, for in the presence of the heathen king he honors his God. "It is not in me," he said; "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Then he told the king the interpretation of the dreams. We know how important was the message of God that Joseph read in Pharaoh's dreams. Think what woe and sorrow and devastation were averted, not for Egypt only, but also for other lands, by the interpreting of those dreams. Think what it would have cost the world if no interpreter had been found. He read the divine meaning that lay folded up in the king's dreams, and the king was enabled by gathering the surplus of the harvests in the years of plenty to feed his people and the starving people of other lands in the years of famine which followed.

Thus Joseph was an interpreter for God. He explained to others the meaning of what God was saying to them. Some writers speak of Joseph as a type of Christ. There certainly are many striking points in which the life of Joseph seems to shadow forth that of Jesus. Like our Lord, he was his father's beloved son. He was sent by his father to visit his brothers on an errand of love; so Jesus was sent. He was seized by his brothers and sold by them for silver; so was the Son of God. Through his bondage and humiliation he became the deliverer, the saviour, in an earthly sense, of his brothers and of the world; Jesus, dragged to death, made redemption for the human family. Joseph as an interpreter for God was also typical of Christ, the great Interpreter. In the largest sense Jesus is the interpreter who alone has made plain to the world the nature and the will of God, and who alone can unfold to us the meaning of the divine revealings for our personal life. It is only in Christ that we can know

God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." As Jesus walked among men and was asked to reveal the Father, he said "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The mysteries of the divine nature were interpreted in Christ. He was the love of God made visible on the earth. Joseph interpreted men's dreams in which Gods' words were wrapped up. Jesus heard men's questions and gave answers to them. He made plain and clear to them the meaning of the divine teachings. All mysteries vanish as we sit at Christ's feet. He is the great interpreter for God.

But there is a sense in which we are all called to be interpreters. When Joseph came to the cell of the prisoners from Pharaoh's palace he saw a deep gloom on their faces. When he asked why they looked so sad, he learned that the cause was their uninterpreted dreams. They were sure that the dreams had a meaning which

concerned their future, and they were burdened and anxious to know what the meaning was. So it is with people all about us. There is sadness in their faces. There are lines that tell of perplexed thought, of earnest questionings which get no answers, of deep cravings to know which cannot be satisfied. If we were to ask every sad person we meet the reason for his sadness, we should find that it is the old story of these prisoners—unanswered questions, uninterpreted mysteries, unexplained trials, unsolved perplexities.

We all need interpreters. The dreams of these two prisoners really were words of God referring to their future, lamps of divine revealing which threw gleams of light upon their destiny. One was a foretelling of life, the other of the swift coming of death. But the men could not understand the words in which the revealing was made. So, in Pharaoh's case, the dreams were not mere meaningless dreams, but were words of God to the king. They

were words, too, of the utmost importance, for they concerned the coming days and were meant to guide the king in his caring for his people. God meant that Pharaoh should know the meaning of the dreams in order that he might act according to the wisdom which this new revealing of the future required. It would have been a great calamity if he had not learned what God had spoken into his ear in these visions of the night. But without an interpreter he never could have known.

So we all stand in this world in the midst of mysterious writings which we cannot read, having our dreams and visions whose meanings we cannot ourselves interpret. Yet these writings and these visions are really God's words to us, divine teachings, which we ought to understand, whose meanings it is intended we should find out. They have their lessons for us. They hold messages of comfort for our sorrows, of guidance for our dark paths, of instruction for our ignorance, of salvation for our

perishing life. We cannot live as we should live unless we learn the meaning of these divine words. We need interpreters.

Take the little child. It comes into the world knowing nothing. On all sides are wonderful things—in the phenomena of nature, in its own life, in the lives of others, in books, in art, in science, in providence; but every door is locked. The child does not understand anything. It cannot read the simplest written sentence. It does not know the meaning of the commonest occurrence. Yet it is here to learn all it can of the mysteries that lie about it. All these things contain words of God which it is intended that the child shall hear and understand—words which concern its own happiness and well-being in the future. But the child needs an interpreter. As soon as it is born it begins to learn. When it is only a few weeks old we see the questions in its eyes. With the first prattlings of speech it begins to ask what this means, and what that is. When it is taught to

read, its wonder grows. Books are full of great secrets. As it becomes older, life's mysteries rise before it. "How do I see? How do I hear? How does my heart keep beating, beating, beating, without pause, day and night? What is that strange voice within my breast which keeps forever saying I must, or I must not?"

Nature, too, has its endless mysteries for the child. We all know how children ask questions. Some of us at times grow almost impatient of their endless interrogations. But the truth is, these mysteries all about them, these strange phenomena, these things they do not know and cannot make out for themselves, are words of God which it is meant they should understand. The children are not impertinent in their incessant asking, What? and Why? and How? They have a right to know what these strange things mean. They would be poor stupid things if they did not care to find out. Their lives would be incomplete, half-blessed, or failures, if they never

learned them. And it is our duty to act as interpreters to them.

The mother is the child's first interpreter for God. She hears its first questions and seeks to answer them. She tells it the meaning of a thousand things. Then the child's teachers come next, with their interpretations. The church, too, has its function of interpretation for childhood, for the most important of all revealings of truth are those which concern God and his will for man—what he is, what are his feelings toward us, what he wants us to be and to do.

But not childhood alone needs an interpreter; all through our life, even to the end, we come continually to questions which perplex us, and we have dreams and visions which trouble us. Life is full of enigmas. We bend over the Bible and find texts we cannot understand. The Ethiopian treasurer, sitting in his chariot, and reading the words of the ancient prophet—reading with deep interest, but not knowing what the words meant, is a picture of many of

us. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" asked the interpreter, who stood beside the chariot. "How can I, except some one shall guide me?" answered the puzzled reader. Then the evangelist sat beside him and showed him a blessed revelation of the Christ in the words which he had not been able to understand. Who has not bent over what seemed obscure Bible texts, unable to find out their sense, until some interpreter came and made the meaning plain?

But it is not for the words of God written in the Bible alone that we need interpreters. There are mysteries in providence; they come into every life at some time. There are dark days in which no light breaks through the clouds. There are nights in which no star shines. We sit with sad heart and with gloom in our face. All things seem to be against us. We cry out with pain and fear. Yet in these very providences there are words of God hidden —good words, words of love, words of mercy.

A minister was talking with his child, about some trouble the child had, and taking a book from his table he pointed to a verse. The child could not make out the words, could not even name a letter. It was in a language he did not know. Then the father told him what the words were, putting them into English. As he did this, the child's face began to brighten. It was a Greek New Testament in which he was reading, and the words were words of love from the lips of Christ. The child needed but to have the interpreter to show him beauty and blessing where all had been mystery before to his eyes. So it is that God's dark providences appear to his children. Yet thoughts of divine love lie in them and we need only to have them interpreted to us.

These are only hints of the great mysteries that lie about all of us in this world, all the way from the cradle to the grave. God gives his messages in many forms—in nature, in the lives of others, in his provi-

dences, in history, in his word, in books and friendships, in circumstances. But how often does the writing baffle us! We need interpreters to read off for us the mysterious handwriting.

All of us in our turn are to be interpreters to others. Joseph found the two prisoners sad and his heart was touched with sympathy. He became eager to comfort them. That showed a noble spirit in him. He had a warm, gentle heart. No one can ever be greatly useful in this world who does not enter into the world's experiences. Christ was moved with compassion when he saw human pain, sorrow and sin. At once his love went out to the sufferer and he desired to help and save. Wherever we go we see sad faces, telling of unrest, or broken peace, of unsatisfied longings, of unanswered questions, of deep heart-hungerings. Sometimes it is fear that writes its lines on the pale cheeks. Sometimes it is perplexity over tangled circumstances, which darkens the features. Sometimes it is baffled

longing; sometimes it is unquenchable desire to know the future; sometimes it is eagerness to learn more of God.

We are sent to be interpreters, each in our own way, and in the things that we know. When we think of it we see that all the rich knowledge of the world has come through God's interpreters. Along all the ages seers have been climbing to the mountain-tops, where the first light breaks, catching the divine meanings in God's writings, and then interpreting them to others. There have been prophets in every age, gifted to look into the scrolls of truth and read off the words and their meaning. The scientific knowledge we have to-day has come through many interpreters who have learned to read God's word in nature. For nature is one of God's Bibles. Long ago David wrote:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament sheweth his handy-work.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.

Their voice cannot be heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world."

All nature's works are pages written full of noble thoughts from God. But not all of us can read the writing. Thousands walk through this world with lovely plants and flowers and a million forms of vegetable life all about them, with the grandeur of mountains, hills, rivers, seas and landscapes on all sides, and with the brilliant splendor of the skies and the starry heavens overarching them, and yet never see anything in all this to stir their heart to admiration or their mind to rapture or praise. But there have been interpreters—men with eyes which saw and with ears which heard, and they have told us something of the wonderful things God has written in nature.

Or take the literature of the world. It is the harvest of many centuries of thought. In every age there have been a few men who have looked into truth with deeper,

clearer vision than their fellows and have heard the whispers of God's voice; then coming forth from their valleys of silence they have told the world what they have heard. They have been God's interpreters.

Take the treasures of spiritual truth which we possess to-day. How have they come to us? We know how the Bible was written. God took Moses up into the mount, and talked with him, as a man talks with his friend, speaking to him great truths about his own being and character, and giving him statutes and laws for the guidance of men; then Moses became an interpreter to the world of the things God had shown him. David was an interpreter for God. God drew him close to his own heart and breathed heavenly songs into his soul; then David went forth, struck his harp, and sang —and the music is breathing yet through all the world. John was an interpreter for God. He lay in Christ's bosom and heard the beatings of that great heart of love, and learned the secrets of friendship with his

Lord; then he passed out among men and told the world what he had heard and felt and seen; and the air of the world has been warmer ever since and more of love has been beating in human hearts. Paul was an interpreter for God. Christ took him away from men and revealed himself to him, opened to him the mystery of redemption as to no other man, and Paul wrote the thirteen or fourteen letters we have of his, which have been marvelous in their influence all these Christian centuries.

But not alone have these inspired men been God's interpreters; many others since have taken up the word of God and have read new secrets, blessed truths, precious comforts, that had lain undiscovered before, and have spoken out to men what they found. Evermore new light is breaking from the Bible.

God gives to every human life that he sends into this world some message to speak out to others. Indeed he never gives any one anything to keep for himself

alone. Every beam of light he flashes into any soul, from a text of Scripture, from a note of song, from a flower, from a star in the heavens, from a book, from the heart of a friend, is an interpretation which is to be given out again. The words he speaks to you in the darkness he wants you to utter forth in the light. Into the heart of every creature therefore he puts something which he wants that creature to speak out to the world. He gives the star a message of light and we look up into the heavens at night and it tells us its secret. Who knows what a benediction the star may be to a weary traveler who finds his way by its beam, or to the sick man lying by his window and in his sleeplessness looking up at the glimmering point of light in the calm, deep heavens? God gives to a flower a message of beauty and sweetness, and for its brief life it tells out its message to all who can read it. And who can sum up all the good that even a flower may do as it blooms in the garden, or as it is carried into a sick room?

But especially does God give to every human life a message to interpret. To one it is a new revealing of science. A great astronomer spoke of himself as thinking over again God's thoughts, as he discovered the paths of the stars and traced out the laws of the heavens. To the poet God gives thoughts of beauty which he is to interpret to the world, and the world is richer, brighter and better for hearing his message.

Thus to every one of us, even the lowliest, God whispers some secret of truth which he wants us to interpret in word or act to others. We cannot all make books or write poems or hymns, which shall bless men; but if we live near the heart of Christ, there is not one of us into whose ear he will not whisper some fragment of truth, some revealing of grace and love; or to whom he will not give some experience of comfort in sorrow, some glimpse of light in darkness, some glimmering of heaven's glory in the midst of this world's care.

God forms a close personal friendship with each of his children and whispers to each one some special secret of love which no other has ever learned before. That now is your message—God's own peculiar word to you—and you are his prophet to forth-tell it again to the world. Let each one speak out what God has given him to tell. If it be only a word, it will yet bless the earth. Suppose that Joseph, knowing by divine teaching, the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams, had remained silent; think what his silence would have cost the world. Or suppose that John, having leaned upon the Lord's breast and having learned the inner secrets of his love, had gone to his fishing after the ascension, and had refused to be an interpreter for Christ, what would the world have lost!

If one only of the million flowers that bloom in summer days in the fields and gardens, refused to bloom, hiding its little gift of beauty, the world would be less lovely. If but one of the myriad stars in

the heavens should refuse to shine, keeping its little beam locked in its own breast, the nights would be a little darker. Every human life that fails to hear its message and learn its lesson from God, or fails to interpret its secret, keeping it locked in the silence of the heart, in some measure impoverishes the earth. But every life, even the lowliest, that learns its word from God and then interprets it to others, adds something at least to the world's blessing and good. Owen Meredith writes,

> Who knows
> What earth needs from earth's lowest creatures? No life
> Can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife,
> And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.

It is the interpretation of life that makes for most in blessing the world. Our creeds may be good, but unless we interpret their articles into sweet, beautiful living, in this world of sorrow and sin, our orthodoxy will count for little. One writes of a day in the dead of winter, when even men and women wrapped in furs could scarcely endure the

biting cold. Yet in the midst of it all, wearing only tatters which flapped in the wind, passed a child, shivering and crouching, as in mumbled words that seemed frozen on his tongue, he cried the names of his papers. One face by its genial light arrested his calling. "Have a paper?" he asked. The kind eye glistened as the stranger took the sheet and glanced at the stiffened fingers, dropping into the boy's hand the value of his fifty papers.

"Ah, poor little friend!" he faltered,
"Don't you shiver and ache with cold?"

The boy, with a gulp of gladness,
Sobbed out, as he raised his eye
To the warmth of the face above him,
"I did, sir—till you passed by!"

That was a bit of true interpretation. We should try to get men and women to know of the love of Christ, and we never can do it in sermons and lessons alone; we must do it in deeds, in living, in ministry, in love that interprets itself in kindly helpfulness, and in truth that is wrought into

honesty, integrity, uprightness and holiness.

Joseph was an interpreter for God; we must be God's interpreters. How? We must live near to God, so as to hear what God has to say to us. We must study God's truth, that his words may become plain to us. If Joseph had yielded to temptation; if he had let his heart grow bitter under injury and wrong; if he had lost his faith in God in the darkness, he could not have been God's interpreter when he was called to tell others the meaning of the divine teachings. So must we keep our heart gentle and warm, our hands clean, our faith strong, our character right, if we would be God's interpreters to others.

Let us set ourselves anew the task and the duty of the interpreter for God. Let us learn well the meaning of God's word that we may interpret that. Let us seek for the key to God's strange providences, that when we are beside those who are perplexed and in darkness, we may speak to them the

interpreting word of divine peace. Let us get into our heart so much of the word, the spirit, and the love of Christ, that we may show in our daily life the beauty of Christ. Whittier truthfully tells us that

> The dear Lord's best interpreters
> Are humble human souls;
> The gospel of a life
> Is more than books or scrolls.
>
> From scheme and creed the light goes out,
> The saintly fact survives:
> The blessed Master none can doubt
> Revealed in holy lives.

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.—*Genesis 45 : 15.*

For life and all it yields of joy or woe,
And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed and is;
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost —
Such prize despite the envy of the world.

— Robert Browning.

V

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

It was a startling revelation to the sons of Israel, when from the lips of the great ruler of Egypt there fell the words: "I am Joseph." No wonder they could not answer him. No wonder they were troubled at his presence.

But let us bring up the story. There were seven years of plenty, and then the seven hungry years began. The famine extended to Canaan, where Jacob lived. He and his household began to be in want. Then Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt. There is a beautiful legend, preserved by the rabbins, which says that one day, in a tender mood, Joseph scattered a few kernels of grain from his full garners in Goshen upon the Nile. These grains were carried to the sea, on the river's broad bosom, and were

then wafted by winds and currents, until they were lodged on the shores of Canaan, thus telling Jacob of the plenty that was along the Nile.

In some way, at least, the old man learned that there was food in Egypt, and that the hungry people of all lands were flocking thither to buy bread. So he sent his sons to obtain provision for his household. The brothers seem to have been slow to start on this journey. Their father had to urge them. "Why do ye look one upon another?" he asked them. "Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die." But we are not surprised that they did not set out eagerly for Egypt. It was into Egypt they had sold their brother. That was more than twenty years ago, but the memory was fresh as ever. There are some things we cannot forget. The mention of Egypt was like a sword in the flesh of these strong men. No wonder they had to be urged to start.

Only ten went. The father would not trust Benjamin away from himself.

Arriving in Egypt, they were ushered into the presence of the governor, and bowed down themselves before him, with their faces to the earth. So Joseph's dreams were fulfilled at last. He knew his brothers. At first he treated them harshly, made himself strange to them, spoke roughly to them. Why did he do this? Was it resentment? Was he repaying the evil they had done to him so long before? No; he was proving them. He wanted to know if they had grown better through the long years. So he tested them at different points, in different ways.

If one has wronged us, treated us unjustly, shown toward us a spirit of envy, or of ingratitude, forgiveness is not all the duty we owe him. We have a duty to the man's soul. We should seek the cure in him of the evil disposition which caused him to sin against us. We should try to make it impossible for him to repeat the wrong to another.

Joseph sought to know before he revealed himself to them whether his brothers had been cured of the badness of heart which twenty years before had led them to treat him so cruelly. Were they penitent, or hardened yet? He found very soon that they were suffering the bitter pain of remorse. He put them for three days into prison, alleging that they were spies. Again they stood before him. Not supposing that he understood their Hebrew language, they talked among themselves:

"They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

Joseph heard their words and understood what they said. He saw that they remembered their sin against him. He saw, too, that they were feeling the sense of remorse and conscious guilt, and believed that the calamity which had now befallen them was

in retribution for the great crime they had committed against their brother.

Remember that he was now testing them, to find out whether they were the same men who had dealt so cruelly with him twenty-two years before. The first testing was encouraging. They seemed to be truly penitent. Joseph was deeply affected. The record says "he turned himself about from them and wept." This shows that even at this first interview his heart was tender and loving toward them. Why did he not then make himself known to them at once? Instead of doing this, however, he suppressed his heart's deep feeling, restrained his longing to say to them, "I am Joseph," and to forgive them, and turned back to them sternly, saying that one of them must stay in prison while the others returned home with food for their households. Then he took Simeon and bound him before their eyes. Why was this seeming severity, when his heart was so full of love for them? He was not yet sure enough of the genuine-

ness of their repentance. Perhaps it was the prison that had wrought this penitence in them. Perhaps they were not really changed in their heart and character. Mere sorrow for wrongdoing is not enough. One may have bitter remorse for a bad past, and yet not be cured of the spirit which did the evil. Would these men do now the same thing, over which they were grieving so bitterly? Joseph was not yet sure, and he would not make the mistake of revealing himself to them and forgiving them, until he was satisfied on this point. So he sent them away.

Nine brothers went back to Hebron. On their way home they were startled at finding their money in their sacks with the food. Guilt makes such cowards of men that every new incident fills them with new terror. Finding the money made the brothers afraid. They interpreted this bit of generosity as evidence of enmity, a trick to get some cause of harming them. Even a sweet bird note sounds like a warning of retribu-

tion to a conscience in remorse. Our own heart makes our world to us. Peace in the bosom changes a wilderness to a garden, thorns to roses, discords to harmonies. But remorse makes a hell of the loveliest spot on God's footstool.

The brothers went home. At length they are back again in Egypt, and Benjamin is with them. They had a kindly reception. The governor asked after the welfare of their father—"the old man of whom ye spoke." He saw Benjamin and his heart yearned upon his brother, and he sought where to weep. He could not keep back the tears, and he entered his own room and there gave vent to his feelings. Gaining control over his emotions, he washed his face, to remove the traces of his tears, and came again to his brothers. He had them dine with him. Still he did not make himself known to them. He let them start homeward again. They are happy now. Benjamin is safe in their midst—that fear is past, the fear that he would be retained.

Simeon is free, too, out of prison and with the others.

But they have not gone far before they are suddenly overtaken by an Egyptian officer who charges them with the theft of Joseph's silver cup. Sack after sack is taken down and searched, in the order of the men's ages. At last the missing treasure is found in Benjamin's sack. Instantly dismay seizes all the brothers. They did not know that Benjamin was innocent, that Joseph had ordered the cup to be put into his sack for a purpose. All the circumstances were against him. It looked as if he were a thief—this youngest brother of theirs, of whom their father was so proud. Here he was, bringing disgrace upon all of them. Now mark where the test of character comes in. If these older brothers had been the same men they were twenty-two years before, they would have made short, sharp work with Benjamin. But what did they do?

They rent their clothes in their sorrow,

and went back, all of them, to the city. They hastened to Joseph's house and fell down before him on the ground. Joseph spoke sharply to them:

"What deed is this that ye have done?"

There was another outburst of penitence: "What shall we say unto my lord? how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found." They do not denounce Benjamin and propose to give him up. They will all stand together.

Joseph said he could not punish the innocent with the guilty. "The man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."

Here was the test. Would these ten men go away and leave Benjamin alone, in the grasp of Egyptian justice, to suffer for his supposed offense? Twenty-two years ago they would have done it. Instead of this, however, we have one of the finest scenes

in all human history. These brothers will not desert Benjamin. The speech of Judah, as he pleads for Benjamin, is one of the noblest pieces of natural eloquence in any literature, sacred or profane.

"Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to

pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down : if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons : and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us ; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life ; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die : and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring

him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever. Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

No one can read these pathetic words of Judah, as he pleads for his brother Benjamin, and not see that these men have been wonderfully changed since that day when they sold another brother into bondage, and were deaf to all his piteous cries and entreaties. Judah evidently speaks for all his brothers. We notice particularly, in these men, a tender regard for their father, which they had not shown before. They had seen his uncomforted sorrow all the years since they had robbed him of Joseph; now they cannot endure to cause him even a single pang. Their gentle thought for him is really beautiful. We notice also a tender love for their youngest brother,

which contrasts wonderfully with their hard-hearted cruelty toward Joseph that day at Dothan. As they were then, they would not have cared what might happen to Benjamin; now Judah begs to take the boy's place and bear his punishment, staying in Egypt as the governor's slave, that Benjamin may return home.

Joseph was now satisfied. At their first visit he had seen their deep consciousness of guilt, as they remembered their sin against him. In this final testing he saw more—he saw that they were changed men. The grace of God had been at work in them. The sin of twenty-two years ago they could not now commit. Penitence had wrought deeply in them, softening their hearts. They were prepared now to stand together as brothers and together to lay the foundation of national life.

The time has come therefore for disclosure. All doubts are gone from Joseph's mind. As soon as Judah had finished his eloquent plea, Joseph caused all strangers

and attendants to go out of the room. No eye must witness the sacred scene which was about to be enacted. When they were altogether alone—those twelve men—Joseph, with streaming eyes and loud weeping made himself known to his brothers. "I am Joseph," he said to them.

Who can imagine their feelings as these words fell upon their ears? First there must have been terror mingled with the amazement. Again all their sin against their brother rose before them. Here was Joseph whom they had so cruelly wronged. He was lord of Egypt, and they were in his power; what would he do with them? Twenty-two years ago they had put him in the pit to die, and then had hastily lifted him out only to sell him as a slave. They had supposed that they were now done with that "dreamer." But here they are before him in utterly reversed position. Is it any wonder they stood dumb in the presence of Joseph, or that they could not answer him, or that they were troubled?

But Joseph's heart was too full to prolong the scene. "Come near to me," he said. "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." But he hastened to comfort them. "And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life . . . to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance." Then he added, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." Then he bade them hasten to his father with the news and to return, all of them, with their father and their families, to dwell in Egypt, to be near to him. The wonderful scene closes with Joseph's falling upon Benjamin's neck in loving embrace, then kissing all his brothers and weeping with them in the joy of reconciliation. The barriers were all now broken down. The old sin was forgiven. The long-sundered family was brought together again. Estrangement had been healed by love and peace.

Here we may pause in the narrative, to gather some of the practical lessons.

Joseph's dealing with his brothers is an illustration of Christ's dealing with us when we have sinned. When the brothers came the first time to Egypt and stood before Joseph, he was ready to forgive them, to be reconciled to them, and to take them into his favor. When he heard them talk in confidence among themselves of their sin against him, he was so moved that he had to turn away from them and weep. There was no bitterness even then in his heart toward them. Yet he did not at once say to them, "I am Joseph," and fall upon their necks in forgiving love. He restrained his tender feelings and impulses. He let them go away and for months longer remain uncomforted by the forgiveness which was even then warm in his heart. He did it because he believed it were better for them that he should do this. He was not satisfied that they had yet reached the experience in which forgiveness would be

the full, rich blessing it should be to them.

In all this we have an illustration of the way Christ ofttimes deals with us in forgiving us. There is forgiveness in his heart the moment we stand before him. We have not to excite and kindle love in him. He loves us in our sins. He is always ready to forgive. But ofttimes he leads the penitent through experience after experience, before he reveals himself in full, rich love. These brothers were sorry for their sin when they first stood before Joseph. "We are verily guilty," they said among themselves.

That was confession. But had their sorrow for their sin cured them of their wickedness of heart? Joseph was not sure at first. Mere consciousness of guilt is not enough when we stand before Christ. It is not enough to say, "I have sinned." There is a sorrow of the world which works death. It is a sorrow because the sin is found out, because it brings shame and re-

proach upon us, because it hurts us among men, or because it must be punished. Such penitence as this does not satisfy Christ. He does not yet declare himself to the man who stands before him, weeping over his sins, but with heart unchanged. He does not yet forgive him. He may even seem cold to him and may treat him with apparent harshness. The sorrow for sin which God wants and waits for is godly sorrow, which works amendment of life, which is not only sorry for past sins, but which can no more repeat those sins. When Joseph learned at last that his brothers were new men, gentle-hearted toward their father whom they had once so cruelly and with such heartlessness, wronged, and loving and noble-spirited toward their brother, instead of manifesting the spirit of envy and wickedness which they had shown toward himself, he quickly revealed his identity to them, forgave them, took them into his heart, and lavished his generous love upon them.

So Christ does. When our repentance is

sincere, true and deep, he reveals himself to us, makes himself known to us, grants us forgiveness and gives us his peace. As Joseph invited his brothers to come to Egypt, where they would be near him and where he could nourish them, so Jesus invites his forgiven ones into fellowship with him, into the family of God, to share all his blessedness and glory.

This story teaches us the duty of forgiving those who have wronged us. It would be hard to conceive of any sorer wrong that could be done to another than was done to Joseph by his brothers. There was no cause for it, either, no provocation. It began in a feeling of envy because their father loved him more than he loved them and weakly showed his preference. It was aggravated by the boy's dreams which he in a naïve and childlike way told them. Envy grew to hate, and hate ripened into the intention of murder, which by God's providence was softened into selling as a slave. Cruel wrong, it was, and causeless.

But we have seen how freely and how beautifully it was forgiven.

There does not appear ever to have been any revengeful feeling in Joseph's breast toward his brothers. He seems to have kept his heart free from any trace of bitterness and full of sweet, gentle love, through the years. When his brothers bowed before him, and he had them in his power, all his old affection for them revived. He forgave them completely. He took them to the old place in his love. He confessed them as his brothers before the king. He had them come and live close beside him, and nourished them with affectionate tenderness.

Surely it is a beautiful picture—Joseph loving and blessing those who had sought to kill him, who had caused him years of sorrow. It is more than a mere human sweetness and gentleness of heart that does this. Centuries before Christ came to teach the world the blessedness of forgiving, before the cross was raised up, before the gospel was written, Joseph had learned the

whole lesson. How? He must have lived close to the heart of God all those years, and thus he became the interpreter of the divine forgiveness.

And the lesson is for us. We live more than as many years after Christ's birth as Joseph lived before he came: have we learned this lesson of forgiveness as well as Joseph had learned it? Are there any of us who have been ill-used by brothers as he was? Are we keeping our own heart sweet and loving under the ill-usage? Or have we allowed bitterness to creep in, a feeling of resentment, a desire for revenge? Let us study the picture of this badly-treated brother forgiving those who had so sorely wronged him, until its spirit sinks into the depths of our spirit. Life is too short for us to carry in our heart, even for one little day, a feeling of bitterness.

"'As we forgive, forgive us'—so we pray.
We are bidden to ask God's pardon every day,
According to the measure of our own —
What if the lips pray when the heart is stone?

Christ might have bidden us beseech of heaven:
'May we forgive, Lord, as we are forgiven!'
But no! He set his bounds of pardon thus
That love, through need, might be more generous.
What if we shut our ears to begging breath
And turn our backs on him who trespasseth?
How do we then forgive our debtors, friend?
That daily prayer we ought to comprehend.
Our measure of forgiveness, small or great,
Will be returned to us, or soon, or late."

We are taught here, too, that God uses even men's evil to help advance his kingdom. Joseph said to his brothers: "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." We can readily see how blessing and good came out of all the evil done by the brothers of Joseph. Had not Joseph been sent to Egypt, no preparation would have been made for the famine. Even the men who did the cruel wrong themselves ate the bread which through their sin had been laid up. This is a wonderful truth. God's hand is on everything. No evil deed of worst men is allowed to run riot among

the divine plans and purposes, or to defeat his love and grace. This does not make sin less sinful; but it assures us that even the wrath of man shall be made to praise God.

It has been said that some of the greatest treasures in heaven will be blunders which God's children have made when trying their best to do something to show their love. The soiled and puckered handkerchief the little girl is trying to hem, because she loves her mother, has a value away beyond anything a seamstress can do. Many a piece of marred work, marred by one who wanted to help Christ, and did her best, will have immeasurable value in God's sight. Many of us in looking back over our life can see many things we thought were mistakes, but which now appear to have been the very best things we could have done. It seems as if the "mistakes" were all the while intended to be there, so thoroughly have they become part of the fabric of our life and work.

Indeed we may go further, and say that the errors, yes, even the sins of our life, when repented of, forsaken and forgiven, are taken into the hand of the great Master builder, and used in the temple walls. The result of Peter's fall was so transmuted that it became a great blessing to him. Some one says, "God does not need our sins to work out his good intentions, but we give him little other material;" and it is surely a comfort to us in our penitence to know that even out of such material he can build beauty and good. It is a comfort to know that while we cannot undo our wrong deeds, God can keep them from undoing us and can even use them in his kingdom.

This truth should not make any one think less penitently of his sins. We may not do evil that good may come, depending upon God to bring good out of it. This would be presumption and blasphemy. The lesson is for those who have sinned and done wrong and foolish things. They never can

be as if they had not done evil. The memory of transgression will always give pain. Penitence is not the best thing—innocence is far better. But, having sinned, penitence is blessed; and even out of the hurt and the marring God can build good. "Ye meant it for evil; but God meant it unto good."

We must all stand one day before him whom by our sins we are grieving and wronging these passing days. The brothers never expected to meet again the lad whom they had sold away as a slave. But one day, in Egypt, they found themselves face to face with him, and heard from his lips the startling words, "I am Joseph." Pilate had Jesus before him, pale and despised, and sent him to his cross. In judgment, Pilate will lift up his eyes on Jesus and hear the words, "I am Jesus." Are you wronging Christ? Are you grieving him, rejecting him? Are you harming any of his little ones? There will be a day when you shall stand before a great white

throne, and shall hear from the lips of him who shall sit there, "I am Jesus." Let us so treat Christ now that when he reveals himself to us in the judgment, it may not terrify us, but give us joy to hear the precious words pronounced by his lips.

JOSEPH AND HIS FATHER

They told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.—*Genesis 45 : 27.*

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

—*Tennyson.*

VI

JOSEPH AND HIS FATHER

EVERY side of Joseph's character is beautiful. Everywhere we see him he bears himself nobly. His childhood was winning. It was a sore test to which he was subjected when he began to endure wrongs; but here the splendor of his spirit shone out in even brighter light than in his childhood. When he was a slave, the manhood in him was free and unshackled. In the hour of temptation his soul remained untarnished. When he was cast into prison, falsely accused, though innocent, hurled into chains and a dungeon, he was not yet crushed. Instead of letting the darkness into his soul to darken his eyes, the light that was in him shone out and filled his prison with brightness, overcoming the gloom. Instead of yielding to discouragement and

despair, he became a comforter of others. He filled the dungeon with the fragrance of love. Then at one bound he passed from the darkness and the chains of cruel imprisonment almost to the throne of Egypt.

Many men who bear adversity well, fail in prosperity. Many a spirit that shines radiantly in trial fades out in the fierce light of human honor and joy. But the promotion of Joseph dimmed no line of the beauty of his soul. He went as quietly to the great tasks of government as ever he had gone to his lowliest duties when a slave. He stood the test of sudden promotion to highest honor.

Again the experience changed. His brothers stood before him—the brothers who had sold him as a slave. This was a sore trial of his character, but he was equal to the testing. There was no bitterness in his heart. One of the most beautiful scenes in all history is Joseph forgiving his brothers.

We pass now to still another chapter in

the life of Joseph, and here, too, we shall find the beauty unsullied, the splendor undimmed. We look at Joseph and his father. We see at once that through all the strange and varied experiences of life he kept his love for his father warm and tender.

There is one incident which at first thought seems to have shown forgetfulness of his old home. When his first son was born he named him Manasseh. "For God," said he, "hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." But he did not mean that the coming of this child into his home blotted out all memory of his father. The words reveal the heart hunger of Joseph for home, love, and domestic ties. He had been torn away from these, and for thirteen years and more had lived unblessed by human affection. Now the hunger of his heart was met by the child he held in his arms. He had now a home of his own, and in the new joy, the years of hungry, unmet love were forgotten, as the earth forgets the desolation of winter when springtime comes

with all its glory of bursting life and bloom and foliage.

But his father was not forgotten even in the gladness of his own happy home. All through the story of the brothers' visits we have glimpses of Joseph's love for his father. Little did those men from Canaan know how eagerly the great governor watched their words to hear about his father. As he pressed on them the charge that they were spies—testing them, learning what was in them, they dropped the words: "Thy servants are sons of one man. . . . The youngest is this day with our father." They spoke carelessly—as to a stranger who knew nothing of their home, but their words told Joseph that his father was yet alive, sending a thrill of gladness into his heart.

The brothers went home and came again, and when they stood before the governor, almost his first word to them was the inquiry, "Is your father well—the old man of whom ye spoke? Is he yet alive?" The brothers saw nothing in the words but the

fine courtesy of a noble gentleman ; yet under the courtesy there throbbed a tender filial love. When Judah presented his plea for Benjamin, referring again and again to his father at home—his old age, his loneliness, his bereavement, his love for Benjamin—so deep and tender that he would die if the lad were not returned to him—he little knew what chords he was touching in the soul of the great man to whom he was speaking. It was this picturing of the aged, sorrowing father that most of all moved Joseph as he listened to Judah's words. When the plea was ended Joseph broke down—could not refrain himself longer, and said amid sobs, "I am Joseph." Then the very next words were, "Doth my father yet live?" A few minutes later, after the passionate assurance of forgiveness had been given, to quiet the hearts of his brothers in their consternation he bade them hasten to their father—"my father," he says now—and say unto him, "Thus saith thy son Joseph, 'God hath made me

lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.' . . . Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither." He sent also wagons to bring his father over the rough roads as softly and gently as possible. He sent him presents, too,—twenty asses carrying provisions and comforts for his father's use on the journey.

Weeks must have passed while the caravan slowly wended its way to Canaan, and while preparations for breaking up the old home and moving were progressing, and while the family journeyed again toward Egypt. At last, however, word came to Joseph that his father was approaching; and he made ready his chariot and went to meet him. Who can tell the tenderness of that meeting? The Bible never indulges in sentimental narration, and yet the picture its words present is very touching. "Joseph presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good

while." It had been twenty-two years since Joseph, a lad of seventeen, had gone away from the home door, to carry messages and tokens to his brothers, expecting in a few days to return. He had never seen his father's face since that morning, and the pent-up love of all the years found expression in his greeting.

Sometimes young men who have risen from a lowly origin to places of honor, have not cared to acknowledge the members of their own family in the presence of the distinguished friends who stood about them in their new rank. But here, too, the character of Joseph shines in brilliant splendor. Egypt was then the first nation of the world in its civilization, its refinement, its culture. The court of Pharaoh was a place of great splendor. Jacob was a plain shepherd, lowly, unconventional in manners, without worldly rank or honor, withered, limping, famine-driven. Far apart were these two men—the governor of Egypt and the patriarch of Canaan. But

the love in Joseph's heart for his father was so strong and so loyal that he never thought of the difference, and he led the old shepherd into the presence of the great king with pride. He told Pharaoh of the coming of his father as eagerly as if Jacob too had been a king. He made provision for his father, also, in Egypt, and nourished him as long as the old man lived. When Jacob was dying, Joseph stood watching by his bedside, the Prime Minister of Egypt by the old shepherd, with beautiful filial devotion. When Jacob was dead Joseph fell upon his face and wept upon him and kissed him. Then followed a funeral like that of a king. Pharaoh's nobles, with the great men of the land, joined the family of Jacob in honoring the father of him who had saved Egypt from famine. Chariots and horsemen were in the august funeral procession that went up to bury the patriarch.

The narration of these incidents in the story shows how loyal to his father Joseph

was. Through all the years the love of his heart continued warm and tender. Amid the splendors of rank and power he never forgot the old man, waiting in sorrow and longing, in his tent in Canaan. When his father came to him, bent, withered, limping, he honored him as if he had been a king. During the remaining years of his life he nourished him in almost royal state. When he was dead he honored him with the burial of a prince.

All this illustrates the nobleness of Joseph's character. The lesson is plain. Children should honor their parents. Nothing more sadly mars the beauty of a life than anything which shows want of filial love and respect. Children never come to an age, while their parents live, when they may cease to treat them with affection and honor, in return for their unselfish devotion, self-denial, and care on their behalf, in the days of infancy and childhood. These are debts we never can pay save by love that stops at no cost or sacrifice, nor flags in its

faithfulness, until we have laid away the revered forms to rest in the grave. Children who rise from lowly and simple homes to wealth, honor or distinction, should never dishonor the parents they have left in the obscurity of the common walks. There have been children who have grown distinguished in the world and then have been ashamed of the old-fashioned father and mother to whom they owed all that gave them power to rise among men. There have been fathers and mothers who, old, poor, broken, and broken-hearted, have been turned away from the splendid mansions of their own children—children for whom they had toiled, suffered and sacrificed, without stint, without complaining, in the time of their infancy and early years. They thought it would disgrace them to own these plain, uncouth, unconventional old people as their parents, in the presence of their fashionable worldly friends. They did not know that their unfilial treatment of their own father and mother left upon them

a dishonor a thousand times deeper than any little social stigma which their acknowledgment of them before their friends could have occasioned. All the world condemns and scorns anything that has the appearance of disrespect to parents. This is a sin which even society never forgives. On the other hand, those who honor their parents have the commendation of all men.

The beautiful example of Joseph should inspire in all children whose parents are living a deep desire to give them comfort, gladness, and tender care as long as they live. In our infancy and childhood they cared for us, not murmuring at the trouble we caused them; when they are in the feebleness of old age and we are strong, it should be ours to repay their care and patience.

If we are blessed with wealth or with plenty, they should share it who shared their all with us in days gone by, perhaps pinched themselves that we might not want, or that we might be better fitted for

life. If we have risen to higher position and greater honor than our parents had, we should bring them into the sunshine that is ours, that the benediction of our favored life may brighten and sweeten their old age. If they are a little peculiar, or odd in their ways, lacking some of the refinements of our more fashionable life, we should remember that these are only outside disfigurements, and that beneath them beat hearts of love, and dwell spirits that are noble with the nobleness of Christlikeness. "The rank is but the guinea's stamp;" the gold may be no finer or purer that bears the mint-mark of the most modern coin, than that which is stamped in some old-fashioned way. Even if parents have marred their life by sin which has brought shame, it were better, like Noah's nobler sons, to close our eyes and to fling the mantle of filial love over the shame.

There is another part of the story of Joseph and his father which has its revealings and its lessons. We turn back to

Hebron, and to the time when the brothers came home from Egypt after Joseph had made himself known to them. They told their father that Joseph was alive and that he was the governor of Egypt, but the old man could not believe the tidings. His heart was overwhelmed. For more than twenty years he had mourned Joseph as dead. The vision of the boy's coat covered with blood, which had been brought home to him, had never faded from his memory. Joseph was dead—he doubted not—torn in pieces by a wild beast. Jacob had never dreamed of seeing his son alive. His only hope had been that in the spirit-land he should see him again. Not a hint nor a whisper of him had ever come back to the old home all these years. Now to hear that he was alive in Egypt was too much for the old father. "His heart fainted, for he believed them not."

His sons sought to make him believe what they had told him. They repeated to him the words of Joseph. While he still

listened, bewildered, doubting, full of conflicting emotions, the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him to Egypt were driven to the door. Then the asses, bearing the provisions and the good things of Egypt also appeared. Now Jacob was convinced. His spirit revived. "And Israel said, 'It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.'" Why did the sight of the wagons help Jacob to believe that Joseph was still alive? Wagons were not known in Canaan at that time, at least, such wagons as those which stood before Jacob's door. These were fine carriages, such as were used by Joseph himself and other members of the royal household. When Jacob saw them he knew at once that they did not belong to Hebron or to any place in that region, but that they had come from Egypt. Thus he was convinced. Joseph must indeed have sent them. So the fruits and other things sent to Jacob's door were unmistakably from Egypt. They could not have grown any place but beside the Nile.

We have here another beautiful illustration of a phase of our Saviour's life. Jacob had long supposed that Joseph was dead. He had seen his coat wet with blood. Now he is told that Joseph is alive. But he cannot believe it. He has no evidence of the fact except the words of his sons. Are they speaking to him seriously and truthfully? He has never been sure of what they told him; they have not been truthful men. Might they not now be trying to deceive him? Besides, might they not be mistaken—deceived themselves? Joseph alive! Joseph governor of Egypt! It cannot be, said the old man. Then came the wagons and the good things of Egypt. "Joseph sent these wagons to carry you to Egypt, and these provisions for your use on the way," said Judah.

"Did Joseph send these?" asked the old man. He looked at the wagons and the provisions. Now he was convinced. "Joseph is alive." These gifts and presents could not have come from any place but

Egypt. They must have come, too, from one that loved him and thought of his comfort. Then they must have been sent by one high in power and position, for they were fit for a king. Thus the wagons and the good things of the land helped Jacob to believe in the continued existence of his son whom he had long thought to be dead.

All this is suggestive and illustrative of the way we are helped in this world to believe in the existence of Jesus Christ in heaven. We know that Jesus died on the cross, slain by wicked hands. We know that he was laid in the grave, and that a stone was rolled to the door. The gospel comes to us, telling us that he is alive. Note here, again, the similarity of Joseph to Christ. Joseph was alive in Egypt—that was what they told Jacob. Jesus Christ is alive in heaven—that is what the gospel tells us. Again, not only was he alive, he was ruler over all the land of Egypt. Jesus Christ is alive forevermore, beyond death;

and he is ruler over all things, King of kings and Lord of lords.

But Jacob could not see Joseph, and could not believe that he was alive. We cannot see into the land of glory, where we are told Jesus lives and rules. We strain our eyes gazing up amid the stars, but we see no face looking down upon us. We call to him, but we hear no voice answering our calls. Can it be true, we ask, that the Jesus who was nailed on the cross and died there, is indeed alive and ruling in heaven? Jacob was convinced that Joseph lived in Egypt when he saw the tokens he had sent. Christ sends us blessings out of heaven, which prove to us that he is really alive there and in power. Do there not come answers to your prayers when you bow and plead with God? Do there not come comforts for your sorrows when your heart is burdened?

Canaan was famine-stricken. There was no bread in all the land. The people were starving. In Egypt there were great store-

houses. From these supplies certain good things came to Jacob's door. Somebody had sent them—somebody who knew him and loved him. They said it was Joseph and the old man believed it.

This world is famine-stricken. There is no bread here for our souls. Heaven has its storehouses. Daily there come to your doors from these reserves of goodness, supplies of blessing. There are blessings just for you, having your name written on them. They just meet your needs. They come just at the right time. "There must be some one in heaven who knows me," you say; "some one who keeps his eye upon me and knows what I need, and then sends his good things to me at the right moment." Yes; that some one is Christ. He is not dead under the Syrian stars—he is alive and in heaven. Then he knows you, and watches you, and sends the blessings your life requires. These good things that come into your days, with their joy and brightness are all from him.

To be sure they tell us that the proofs of Christ's resurrection are infallible—the historical proofs. St. Paul said they were. Witnesses saw him. He gave indubitable evidences of being truly alive. He ate with his friends. He talked with them. He showed them the nail prints in his hands and feet and the spear wound in his side. He remained on the earth for forty days until the last shred of doubt of his resurrection had vanished from the slowest to believe of all his friends. St. Paul said triumphantly, "Now is Christ risen from the dead." The historic evidence is utterly invincible. But a proof still more convincing and sure is found in the experience of every believer. We know that Christ lives and reigns in heaven, for every day blessings come to us that could have come from no land but the heavenly land, and that no one but Jesus could have sent to us. The forgiveness of our sins, the peace that fills our heart, the joy that comes in sorrow, the help that comes in weakness, the human

friendships that bring such benedictions, the answers to prayer, the blessings of providence—who but Jesus could send all these heavenly good things to us? These are the best proofs to us that Jesus lives and rules in the land of blessedness and glory.

Wagons came for Jacob, to bear him to Egypt. Wagons will come for us by and by to carry us home. A chariot of fire, with horses of fire, came for Elijah and bore him away into heaven. The chariots need not be visible—are not visible—that come for God's people; nevertheless they are real. Jacob was not left in famine-smitten Canaan while Joseph continued to live and rule in glory in the land of corn and wine. The royal carriages came to take him to his son. This, too, is a parable. We learn that Jesus lives and rules in heaven. We have glorious proofs of this. We bow in prayer and we know that our Redeemer liveth and that he hears us and remembers us.

But that is not all; that is not the best.

To know that Christ, though unseen, is yet yonder in the silences, amid the hallelujahs; that he ever lives to make intercession for us; that he sends blessings down to us on the earth, heaven's good things,—is a very precious truth. Even this is a joy that thrills our hearts. But there is something better. We are not to stay always on this earth, separated from our Saviour. The wagons came and took Jacob away from that land of hunger, with its mere handfuls of the good things of the land of plenty, and bore him right into the heart of the country where his son ruled. He was met on the borders of the country by the son who had died to him, but still lived. He was welcomed by him with love's warmest welcome. He was presented to the king who bade him dwell in the best of the land. There he stayed close to his son, nourished by him. No longer did he have merely a few of the good things, sent from far away, as tokens of the abundance in store yonder; he dwelt now in the very

midst of the storehouses and had all that he could wish.

We see how beautifully true all this parable is, in its application to Christ's believing ones in this world. Here our joy is very sweet, but we have only little foretastes of the heavenly good things. By and by the wagons will come for us to take us into the very presence of Christ. Already they have come for some of our friends and have borne them to the land of life and blessedness. That is what death is—God's chariot swinging low, to carry home the loved saint. When Jacob got into the royal carriage and it drove away, he was not sad. He was leaving his old walks and the place of his sorrows, but he was going to his son. He was leaving famine and want, and was going to a land of plenty. That is what dying is to the Christian. We shall leave the place of toil and care, to find rest. We shall leave the land of tears and separations, to go into the presence of the loved and lost, when

"The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile."

The wagons of heaven have been at our doors already and have taken some of ours home. Some day they will come for us, and we will go away from this earth where the famine is, and where we cannot see our Saviour. But it will not be a sad day to us, if we are Christ's own by faith. The wagons will take us to the land where our Saviour lives in glory and reigns over all. He will meet us on the edge of that blessed country.

"Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark;
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark.

For when from out our bourne of time and place,
The flood shall bear me far,
I hope to meet my Pilot face to face,
When I have crossed the bar."

He will meet us on the borders of the land of blessedness. He will welcome us with tenderest love. He will present us to

his Father—not ashamed to own us as his friends, his brothers, his sisters, before all heaven's angels. He will give us a place near to himself, close to the center of heaven's glory. There he will nourish us with heaven's choicest fruits, and we shall go no more out forever.

Our Joseph has gone before us to prepare a place for us: and when the place is prepared for us and we are prepared for the place, he will come again and receive us to himself, that where he is there we may be also. Dying is but going from where we get only the crumbs, to sit at the full table.

The doctor had spoken of the importance of keeping everything serene in the death-room, where a Christian woman was about to take her departure. "I do not see anything here to make us unserene," she said. "Death is but entering into wider, fuller life." Shall we not try to get true views of Christian dying?

"Death is the crown of life:
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain:
Were death denied, to live would not be life:
Were death denied, even fools would wish to die.
Death wounds to cure: we fall; we rise; we reign;
Spring from our fetters; hasten to the skies,
Where blooming Eden withers in our sight:
Death gives us more than was in Eden lost;
The king of terrors is the prince of peace."

JOSEPH—OLD AGE AND DEATH

By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.—*Hebrews 11: 22.*

Old—are we growing old?
Life blooms as we travel on
Up the hills, into fresh, lovely dawn;
We are children who do but begin
The sweetness of life to win.
Because heaven is in us, to bud and unfold,
We are younger for growing old!

—*Lucy Larcom.*

VII

JOSEPH—OLD AGE AND DEATH

A RECORD in Genesis tells us that Joseph said to his brothers one day: "I die: but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."

Our last study brought us to the close of Jacob's life. Word was sent to Joseph one day that his father wished to see him. The old man was thinking of his departure. He knew that he must die in Egypt, but he did not want to be buried in that strange land. He wanted to lie in the land of promise. So he asked Joseph to swear to him, in the rude fashion of the times, that he would not bury him in Egypt.

Joseph promised. "Swear unto me," said Jacob. And Joseph sware unto him. It was no mere sentiment that made the old man, as his end drew nigh, crave to lie beside his father and his wife in the cave of Machpelah; it was his strong faith in God's promise to give Canaan to his descendants. He believed that the promise would be fulfilled and he wanted his grave to be where the future home of his children would be. Then he wanted his family, though still abiding in Egypt, to have a constant reminder that Egypt was not their home. He knew that his grave in the land of promise would continually draw upon their hearts.

There was another incident. Jacob was sick. Joseph heard it and hastened with his two sons to his father's bedside. Jacob adopted these boys as his own, taking them in among his own sons, kissing and embracing them, then stretching out his thin, trembling hands and laying them on the heads of the lads, while he uttered this beautiful benediction upon them:

"God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them."

Then we have the death scene. All the sons are there and the dying patriarch, in prophetic words, unveils the future of each in turn. We need not linger on these patriarchal predictions, interesting as they are. But it is interesting to note the blessing pronounced upon Joseph:

Joseph is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a fountain;
His branches run over the wall.
The archers have sorely grieved him,
And shot at him, and persecuted him:
But his bow abode in strength,
And the arms of his hands were made strong,
By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob.
(From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel,)
Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee,
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath,
Blessings of the breast, and of the womb.
The blessings of thy father

Have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:
They shall be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him that was separate
from his brethren.

It is a solemn moment to a man when he stands by the deathbed of a loved and honored father. He lives over again all his own life as he watches the last breathings of his sire, and listens to the last words of farewell and benediction. Those were intensely solemn moments to Joseph. All his honors seemed small as he stood there by that patriarchal bed and felt on his head the touch of the hand now growing cold in death.

At length the feeble voice ceased to speak. The blessings were all pronounced. Then came the dying charge. "Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron." And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. What a strange thing is death! He who

but a little while ago was breathing out his blessings and his farewells, is gone now, away from earth. The old house is empty. The love that thrilled the heart with its tenderness and flushed the face with its glow and warmth, an hour ago, has passed from earth. Tennyson writes:

> Life and thought have gone away
> Side by side,
> Leaving door and window wide—
> Careless tenants they!
>
> All within is dark as night:
> In the windows is no light;
> And no murmur at the door,
> So frequent on its hinge before—
>
> Close the door, the shutters close,
> Or through the windows we shall see
> The nakedness and vacancy
> Of the dark deserted house.

So that sacred form looked to Joseph as he stood by the bedside and saw that the breathing had ceased. Strange mystery of dying! How orphaned it leaves us when it is a father or a mother that is gone. We never get ready to lose our parents. No

matter how old they are, how ripe their life, how full their years, the time never comes when we can lose them without a pang. Life is never quite the same again when they have left us. One writes of the home when the mother has gone from it:

The fire sends forth its ruddy glow,
The brazen lamp is brightly lit
Within the room, where long ago,
Dear mother always used to sit.
This was her chair. . . . Ah, fire and lamp
Are hopeless things where ghosts abide.
The spot seems ever dark and damp
Since mother died.

Here is her workbox on the shelf—
Her little bird bides there—poor thing!
In those old times, the merry elf
Did nothing all day long but sing.
'Tis silent now; it sadly broods,
And 'neath its wing its head doth hide;
We cannot understand its moods
Since mother died.

The clock, too, on the western wall,
The clock her hand so often wound,
Like some dead friend is mute to all,
Its silver bell gives forth no sound.
Before its corpse-like face I cower
And note its lifeless hands stretched wide;
It never once hath told the hour
Since mother died.

Days come and go—now fast, now slow —
And is the weather foul or fair?
Is that the sunshine or the snow?
I know not. Here's her vacant chair.
And nought is as it used to be
When we were happy at her side;
Life, love, seem sorely changed to me
Since mother died.

It is always so when either father or mother is gone. Life is never the same again. Something has gone out of our life, something very precious, which we never can have again. Never more a mother's prayers—lost and missed now for the first day since we were born. No more a father's love, thought, care, and hope, in this world,—wanting now, first, since infancy. The consciousness of bereavement is keener when a parent is taken away in the child's earlier years, and the loss is greater, in a sense, but perhaps the pain is no deeper. No wonder that Joseph fell upon his father's face and wept upon him and kissed him, when he saw that he was dead. His grief was sore, his sense of loss was great.

Quickly Joseph set about to do all that love could do to honor the name and memory of his father. The body was embalmed. Then followed seventy days of mourning—according to the custom in Egypt. After this the patriarch's dying command was obeyed, and the twelve sons, with many Egyptian friends, among them men of rank, bore the body away to Canaan, and laid it to rest beside the bodies of his kindred.

It was at Hebron, in the cave of Machpelah. This cave is covered now by a great Mohammedan mosque. The entrance is so sacredly guarded that none save Mohammedans can enter it. There are shrines in the mosque for each of the dead who sleep beneath—Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, Jacob. In the interior of the sacred building is a small circular opening which leads down into the ancient cave, where, no doubt, the twelve sons of Jacob laid the embalmed body of their father. Mohammedanism cannot always keep such

jealous guard over that sacred burying-place, and it is the dream of many that some day this cave may be opened and explored, and that the mummy of Jacob may be found, as, recently, in Egyptian burying-places the mummies of many distinguished men, including one of the Pharaohs of the days of Moses, have been discovered.

After the burial of his father the story of Joseph is almost a blank. Only one incident is given. When Jacob was gone the brothers grew uneasy. They thought that their father's influence had restrained Joseph from seeking revenge upon them for their sin against him, and they feared that now, when this restraint had been taken away, Joseph would visit punishment upon them. The memory of sin dies hard. It had been forty years since this wrong was committed, and for seventeen years the brothers had lived in the sunshine of Joseph's forgiveness, nourished by his love, without a word or an act to suggest aught of resentment; yet here we find the old dread

still lingering. Guilt makes cowards of men. Sins against love plant thorns in the heart.

Joseph wept when he heard his brothers' words. It pained him to learn that they doubted his love and forgiveness. When you have been a loyal and faithful friend to another, loving him unselfishly, making sacrifices for him, giving of your life's strength and skill to help him, putting honor upon him, it grieves you sorely to have him misunderstand you, suspect your sincerity and doubt your affection. Seventeen years of such generous love as Joseph had shown to his brothers in Egypt ought to have made it forever impossible that they should doubt or suspect his forgiveness. Do we ever treat our friends so? Do we never treat Christ so? Do we never doubt his forgiveness, or question his love for us? Let us not grieve that gentle heart by even the faintest doubt of a love that is infinite in its truth and its tenderness.

Joseph was pained when he heard of the

fears and the distrust of his brothers, but his patience did not fail. "Fear not," he said to them: "for am I in the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones." This was his answer to their distrust. It takes a large heart to love on in spite of doubt, suspicion and unwholesome discontent; but Joseph had a large heart. His generous love never failed. In this case its warm tides overflowed the new barriers his brothers' distrust had cast into the channel and buried them out of sight. His answer was only a new assurance of affection undisturbed by their treatment; he would nourish them in the days to come as he had done in the past. He would share his honor with them. He would provide for them in the land where they were strangers. He would care for their children. So he comforted them and spoke kindly unto them.

After this incident Joseph lived fifty-four years, but nothing whatever is told us of these years. We can picture to ourselves a ripe and beautiful old age, full of honors and full of usefulness. He had saved Egypt and there is no reason to suppose that he failed to receive the gratitude of the people of the country unto the end of his course.

We know that his life continued beautiful to its close. Sometimes old age does not fulfil the prophecy and the promise of the earlier years. Sometimes men who live nobly and richly until they have passed the meridian of their days, lose in the splendor of their character and the sweetness of their spirit as they move toward the sunset. A great many sermons are preached to the young. No doubt youth has its perils and needs constant warnings. But there is need also of wise words of counsel to those who are growing old. Old age has its perils and its temptations. It is hard to bear the honors of a good and worthy life, as they gather about the head when the years

multiply, and not be spoiled by them. It is hard to keep the heart humble, and the life simple and gentle, when one stands amid the successes, the achievements, the fruits of one's life's victories, in the days of a prosperous old age. Some old men grow vain in their self-consciousness. They become garrulous, especially about themselves and their own past.

The ease and freedom from care which come sometimes as the fitting reward of a life of hardship, toil and sacrifice, do not always prove the happiest conditions, nor those in which the character shows at its best. Some men who were splendid in incessant action, when bearing great loads and meeting large responsibilities, and in enduring sore trials, are not nearly so noble when they have been compelled to lay down their burdens, drop their tasks and step out of the crowding, surging ranks into the quiet ways of those whose life work is mainly finished. They chafe in standing still. Their peace is broken in the very days

when it should be calmest and sweetest. They are unwilling to confess that they are growing old and to yield their places of burden and responsibility to younger men. Too often they make the mistake of overstaying their best usefulness in positions which they have filled with wisdom and honor in the past, but which with their waning powers they can no longer fill acceptably and well. In this respect old age puts life to a crucial test.

Then sometimes old age grows unhappy and discontented. We cannot wonder at this. It becomes lonely, as one by one its sweet friendships and its close companionships fall off in the resistless desolation that death makes. Then it is hard to keep sweet and gentle-spirited when the hands are empty and one must stand aside and see others do the things one used to do himself. Feebleness of health, too, comes in ofttimes as an element which adds to the hardness of living beautifully when one is old.

These are some of the reasons why old age is a severer testing time of character than youth or mid-life. Many men who live nobly and richly while in their prime fail in their old age. The grace of Christ, however, is sufficient for the testings and the trials of the old as well as of the young. We should set ourselves the task of making the whole day of life to its last moments beautiful. The late afternoon should be as lovely with its deep blue and its holy quiet as the forenoon, with its freshness; and the sunsetting as glorious with its splendor of amber and gold as the sunrising with its radiance and brightness. The old, or those growing old, should never feel for a moment that their work, even their best work, is done, when they can no longer march and keep step in the columns with youth and strong manhood. The work of the riper years is just as important as that of the earlier years. Young men for action, old men for counsel. The life that one may live in the quieter time, when the rush and

the strife are left behind, may be even more lovely, more Christlike, more helpful than was the life of the more exciting, stirring time that is gone. Life ought to grow more beautiful every day to its close. Let no one think that he has finished his task of sweet, true living when he has got safely through the years of mid-life, into the borders of old age. No; we must not slacken our diligence, our earnestness, our fidelity, our prayerfulness, our faith in Christ, until we have come to the gate of eternity. God's plan for our life takes in all.

"Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made;
Our times are in his hands who saith, 'A whole
I planned: Youth shows but half:
Trust God: see all, nor be afraid.'"

Dr. Chalmers wrote: "It is a favorite speculation of mine, that if spared to sixty years of age, we then enter the seventh decade of human life; and that this, if possible, should be turned into the Sabbath of our earthly pilgrimage, and spent sabbatic-

ally, as if on the shores of an eternal world, or, as it were, in the outer courts of the temple that is above, the tabernacle that is in heaven." My correspondent, himself an old man, living in this Sabbath of his own life and trying to make it truly a Lord's day, adds: "A beautiful thought, and as true as beautiful. Age is a time for waiting, praying, hoping, and for reflecting to others, something of the peace and love of the heaven we are nearing, and of the Christ we hope soon to see."

At last the time came for Joseph to die, as this time must come to all. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, 'I die: but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.'" Then the record goes on giving the end of the story: "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and

they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

Embalming was a costly process. When the body had been prepared it was wrapped in bands of fine linen and placed in a stone or wooden coffin or mummy case. The Egyptian funeral rites were very elaborate. Because of his great service to the country Joseph might have had a burial with the highest honors; but he refused all this. It is said that among the ruins of that wonderful land there has been discovered a tomb which it is thought was prepared for Joseph. It is near the pyramid of one of the Pharaohs. It is the tomb of a prince. It bears the name "Eitsuph"—or Joseph, and the title "Abrech" which means "Bow the knee." If this tomb was prepared for Joseph he refused to have his body rest in it. He was not an Egyptian, but an Israelite. Like Moses, afterwards, he preferred to share the reproaches of his own people rather than receive the honors of a heathen nation. Joseph was not buried at all in

Egypt. His body was embalmed there, but not entombed. Egypt had long been his home. It had been the scene of all his honors and triumphs. His wife was an Egyptian. His friends were Egyptians. But he was still a loyal Israelite, and would not lie in an Egyptian grave. He would be buried in an Israelite grave. This is the first thought which Joseph's dying command suggests. He was patriotic.

But there are other thoughts. In the Epistle to the Hebrews when the faith of Joseph is spoken of, it is remarkable that it is this command concerning his bones that is mentioned. "By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." How did this show his faith? It showed that he believed God's promises concerning his people. His faith was so strong that he refused to be buried at all in Egypt; his burial must wait until his people went up out of Egypt to their own land.

Mark the difference in the dying requests of Jacob and Joseph. Jacob, too, refused to be buried in Egypt. He had spent seventeen happy years there, and his family was well settled, with his son honored in all the land. But he could not die until he had the pledge that he would be buried beside his kindred. Joseph's request was different. He was not to be buried in Egypt, yet his body was not to be carried to Canaan until his people should go there. He was so confident of their exodus that his mummy was not to be laid in the grave at all until they went back to the land of promise.

There was a special reason why Joseph made his will in this way. He wanted even his bones to do good after his death. His people would need all the influences that could be put into their lives, in the long, dark years of trial before them, to keep alive in their hearts the memory of the promises, love for Canaan, and the hope of possessing that land. The graves of their fathers were there—that made the country

dear to love and hope. But Joseph felt that his mummy left among them unburied, waiting to be carried away to Canaan and buried there, would do more to keep hope alive in their hearts than if it lay at rest yonder in the cave of Machpelah. Every time they saw it they would remember why it was unburied, and their thoughts would turn toward their land of promise.

By and by it grew very dark in Egypt. The dynasty of the Pharaohs who had been Joseph's friends gave way to a new dynasty who cared not for his memory and were jealous of the growth of the Israelites. Bitter oppression followed. In those days of gloom, who knows how much the unburied mummy of Joseph, with its unspoken words of hope, helped to keep the people from despair?

Then one night there was great excitement in Goshen. The hour of departure had come. Here is the record: "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children, say-

ing, 'God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.'" Then followed forty years of weary marching and wandering, and during all this time the mummy of Joseph was in the column or in the camp.

At length there was a funeral one day at Shechem, and those bones, in their Egyptian mummy case, were laid to rest by Joshua. Here again is the record: "And the bones of Joseph . . . buried they in Shechem, in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor." When tourists journey in the Holy Land they are shown at Shechem the tomb of Joseph. It is but a little way from the pit at Dothan, into which his brothers cast him to die. So the great wrong is righted, for the world now honors his grave.

We may take two lessons from Joseph's dying words. One is a lesson of faith. "I die: and God will surely visit you." He would die, but God would live on and his work would go on. "God buries his work-

men, but carries on his work." We have only our little fragment to build in the wall. Then we shall die, but the work will go on, for God lives on and his plans and purpose shalt not.

The other lesson is, that we should live so that the memory of our life and its influence, when we are gone, shall inspire those who stay behind. The memory of the just is blessed. Joseph's embalmed body, kept among his people, spoke not only of his noble work in the past, but declared ever the word of hope for the future. It said: "This is not your home. You are but tarrying here as strangers and pilgrims. By and by you will go on."

Such should ever be the impression that our life makes and that our memory keeps alive in other hearts. We should so live that when we are gone every recollection of us shall make others think of heaven as home. We have not lived at our best if the memory of our life only makes our friends think of us. The true life must ever speak of things spiritual and eternal.

Let us seek then to be so filled with Christ that every influence of our life shall incite men upward, toward God, and onward, toward imperishable things, starting in every heart the prayer of divine discontent —

> "O for man to arise in me,
> That the man that I am may cease to be."

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